The Dissertation Committee for Nicholas Matthew Copeland Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

BITTER EARTH: COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY AND THE ROOTS OF MAYAN NEO-AUTHORITARIANISM IN GUATEMALA

Committee:

Charles Hale, Supervisor

Kathleen Stewart, Co-Supervisor

Kamran Asdar Ali

Virginia Garrard-Burnett

Pauline T. Strong

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by

Nicholas Matthew Copeland B.A.; M.A.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Stapp Beeton. We will always miss you.

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BITTER EARTH: COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY AND THE ROOTS OF MAYAN NEO-AUTHORITARIANISM IN GUATEMALA

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Ten years after the Guatemalan Peace Accords heralded the construction of a multi-ethnic democracy, corrupt neo-authoritarian regimes have derailed the Accords, continued state violence and impunity, and implemented neoliberal economic policies that have worsened poverty in Mayan highlands. Strangely, war tattered and impoverished rural Mayans, including many who supported the revolutionary left in the 1970s, provide these parties' main base of support. Stranger still is widespread support for ex-dictator general Ríos Montt, who stands indicted for genocide of Mayans in the 1980s. Mayan support for neo-authoritarians is usually viewed as either an expression of pure democratic free will or as the repression of revolutionary consciousness through fear and/or deception. While the former ignores massive Mayan support for the left and trivializes decades of repression, the latter ignores important changes in Guatemalan political culture and erases Mayan agency. My dissertation reframes this phenomenon by providing a critical genealogy of Mayan political imaginaries in relation to overlapping and competing regimes of power for the last sixty years. During 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the right-dominated Mayan-Mam town of San Pedro Necta, I investigated Mayan responses to reformist and revolutionary organizing, state repression,

state-led agrarian modernization, and neo-authoritarian development populism. I focus on the effects of these mechanisms on evolving conceptions and practices of politics, development, and community among township inhabitants. *Bitter Earth* locates the appeal of neo-authoritarian politics in the ways that state strategies have rearranged the conceptual and affective terrain upon which Mayans collectively struggle for economic security, dignity, and racial equality. This research shows the limits of neoliberal multiculturalism, particularly its complicity with colonial governance and counterinsurgency strategy, and orients our thinking towards political alternatives consistent with Mayans' long-term struggles for racial justice and community autonomy.

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INTRODUCTION

Theorizing Neo-authoritarian Populism in Guatemala

ELECTORAL MAYHEM IN HUEHUETENANGO, 2003

When General Ríos Montt, Guatemala's ex-dictator-turned-presidential candidate, arrived in the highland town of San Pedro Necta in September 2003 at the peak of electoral season to speak at a campaign rally, he was not ready for the hostility that awaited him. In addition to the hundreds of supporters congregated in the municipal *fútbol* field that day, carrying blue and white banners for Ríos Montt's party, the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG), were hundreds of angry men, armed with machetes and farming tools, who wanted a piece of him. Ríos was forced to cancel the rally and make an emergency landing in a nearby town. The angry men were former members of the *patrulleros de autodefensa civil* (civil self-defense patrols, known as the 'PAC' or ex-PAC) a state mandated paramilitary organization formed by Ríos Montt in 1982 and disbanded in 1996 by the Peace Accords. Although all ex-PAC were promised payment for service by the FRG leadership months before, the payment was now being politicized, only going to FRG affiliates, including many too young to have ever patrolled.[1] Events in San Pedro were small slices of a violent and contested electoral season, Guatemala's sixth since the democratic transition began in 1986, and the second since the Peace Accords.

The civil patrols were a crucial element in the army's approach to counterinsurgency, the centerpiece of which was an incomprehensibly brutal wave of

massacres in hundreds of highland villages known as the *tierra arrasada* (scorched earth) campaign, launched after Ríos Montt took power by coup in 1981. In the wake of the massacres, rural men between the ages of 16 and 60 were forced by threat of imprisonment, torture, or death to patrol in search of guerrilla combatants in their midst for one 24-hour shift a week. The decision to pay each civil patroller Q5,241[2] was, second only to his inscription as a candidate, the most hotly contested element of Ríos Montt's presidential campaign, which was riddled with illegality and chicanery. The FRG was regularly derided by the national press, civil society organizations, and by international donor countries (including the US State Department) for a laundry list of electoral 'fouls.' In June of that year, FRG supporters, masked and armed, shut down the capital to pressure the government to accept the legality of Ríos Montt's candidacy, despite the fact that the constitution, ratified in 1985, specifically prohibits anyone who has taken power by coup from running for the presidency.[3] The law was made specifically to block Ríos. These protests, known as *Jueves Negro* (Black Thursday), were organized by FRG leadership, among them Ríos's daughter, Zury, a *diputada* (legislator) and wife of US senator Jerry Weller from Illinois. Afterwards, a supreme court, stacked by the FRG in the previous regime, overruled a lower court decision prohibiting Ríos Montt's candidacy.[4] Exasperated political opponents on the left complained that members of the PAC had committed numerous human rights abuses while those on the right warned that the payment would break the national budget. Other charges included buying votes with public funds;[5] bypassing legal channels to concentrate distribution of development projects to rural areas; and, the worst sin of all,

polarizing the population with a 'populist' discourse that sides with the poor masses against the rich. For many Guatemalans, the primary scandal of Ríos Montt's campaign concerned and his role during *la violencia,* the common name Guatemalans give to the period of intense repression from the late 1970s to 1983. In fact, the same election year, a Spanish prosecutor had indicted Ríos for war crimes and genocide along with several retired generals, including two ex-presidents—Oscar Humberto Mejia Víctores and Romeo Lucas García (now dead).

Despite vehement opposition to Ríos Montt in San Pedro over the politicization of the PAC payment and his violent past, the FRG's local candidate for *alcalde* (mayor) handily won the election, gaining 2,230 votes out of over 7,000 cast—and over a thousand more than the second place candidate from the *Partido de Accion Nacional* (PAN). With similar numbers, Ríos Montt likewise dominated in local votes for president, making San Pedro Necta part of a near FRG sweep of the predominantly Mayan rural highlands. The victory of Rios Montt's party, the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco,* FRG in local elections in 2003 effectively ended the reign of local Mayan activists who, since the late 1980s had supported center-Right parties, and had edged towards Mayan-centered and Leftist parties in 2003 elections.

While the FRG was defeated in the 2003 national elections, their influence in the highlands increased. Ríos came in a distant 3rd place in the first round of votes for president, leaving him out of the national runoff, in which the right wing Oscar Berger, a sugar magnate from the right wing Grand National Alliance, (GANA) party, defeated Alvaro Colom, representing the center left National Unity of Hope, (UNE).[6] Although

many celebrated the defeat of the FRG, including Rigoberta Menchú, who subsequently joined the GANA government, the feeling of relief was premature: FRG victories in the highlands left them in control of Congress with forty-five *diputados* (legislators), compared to the GANA, which had 43.[7] The FRG also won far more mayoralships than any other party (110 out of 237).[8] Their influence on national politics remained intact.

INTERROGATING MAYAN AUTHORITARIANISM

This dissertation investigates why a so many rural Mayans—including many who once supported the revolutionary left in the 1970s—now, after democratization, align with corrupt neo-authoritarian regimes that implement neoliberal economic policies. Mayan support for the far right is typically viewed either as pure free choice or pure repression. None of the existing explanations captures the specificity of Mayan support for the far right. And few studies examine the agency of rural Mayans who have shifted political affiliations from the left to the right.[9]

Guatemalan conservatives celebrate Mayan participation in neo-authoritarian parties. They frame this participation as "support," an expression of the democratic free will of a group that, in this narrative, never willingly supported the left. Neoliberals in Guatemala and the US decry populist politics, especially the anti-rich, Mayan-centric discourse of Ríos Montt, but affirm them as democratic. Reading Mayan participation in right-wing parties as "support" reinforces the powerful narrative, hegemonic in Guatemala and the US, that constructs Guatemala as a democratic nation, as good and legitimate as any other, deserving of sovereignty. But this perspective contradicts

emerging accounts of widespread and enthusiastic Mayan investment in the revolution (McAllister 2003, Grandin 2004). It also denies any impact of decades of extreme violence and intense militarization on Mayan politics (CEH 1999, REHMI 1998).[10] Likewise, the provocative assertion that Mayans only participated in the left due to coercion, and now blame the left for provoking the genocide (Stoll 1993) assigns no influence to Orwellian repression on shaping this public memory (Hale 1997).

Leftists and politically engaged scholars contend that participation in the far-right stems from extreme violence and surveillance that have created a "culture of fear" which represses latent political dissent among Mayans (Green 1999; Manz 1994, 1991, 2001, 2002; Sanford 2003).[11] A good deal of work concerns the immediate psychological effects of violence on individuals and does not address the long-term effects on individuals and community political behavior (cfa Manz 1988, Carmack et al 1988). This analysis focuses our attention to the pervasive and continued effects of violence, but does not seem to fit the post-Accords era, which is characterized by more selective state violence, Truth Commissions, de-militarization, the Pan-Mayan movement, legalization of the left, state multiculturalism, and limited democratization. These constructions tend to assign an omnipotent functionality to state power and negate Mayan agency.[12] This line of thought also downplays elements of Mayan politics that do not fit within the romanticized image of the 'revolutionary Indian' (cfa Carmack 1995).

Other scholars emphasize ideological resonance. For example, Annis (1987) argues that many Mayans see Ríos Montt as a vanguard for a rising Protestant moral order. But it is unclear the role assigned to violence in this explanation, which is also

quite dated and based on questionable premises.[13] Furthermore, it does not explain substantial support for the FRG among non-Protestant Mayans' or the fact that Ríos Montt is widely hated in the highlands.

Hale (2002, 2006) makes a stronger version of this argument. He locates Mayan support for the FRG in a move by right wing parties to open a sanctioned space for indigenous politics, part of what he calls "neoliberal multiculturalism." By using a Mayan-centric, anti-rich populist discourse, seeking Mayans to occupy key leadership positions in local politics, and providing development, Mayans have come to view the FRG as the "Mayan" party, most in tune with and responsive to their desires and sensibilities. A critical take on the cultural politics in leftist organizations complements this argument. Hale (1996, 2002) and Smith (1990b) argue that racism and authoritarianism in leftist groups, and their seeming inability to appreciate cultural difference, undermines the appeal of leftist organizations to rural Mayans.

These arguments point to very important shifts in the Mayan-state relationship, but do not resolve the puzzle of neo-authoritarian political alignment. If Mayans are persuaded by populism multiculturalism, why do so many rural Mayans still hate Ríos Montt, and think of him as a corrupt assassin? Why do some Mayan communities consistently support the left? Leftist groups have engaged in a substantial rethinking on the politics of cultural difference, and are also usually indigenous-run at the local level in highland towns. Why do cultural criticisms seem to have less of an impact on right wing parties, which, in addition to being Ladino-run at the higher levels, are implicated in military atrocities against Mayans?[14] Moreover, it is unclear how persistent state violence

and spatial control through violence and development works alongside multi-culturalist populist appeals in the formation of Mayan political subjectivities. The emphasis on 'consent' tends to downplay the effects of 'coercion' still at work in Mayan towns.

Bitter Earth reframes Mayan neo-authoritarianism by providing a critical genealogy of Mayan political imaginaries in relation to overlapping and competing regimes of power for the last sixty years.[15] During 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in the right-dominated Mayan-Mam town of San Pedro Necta, I examined Mayan responses to revolutionary organizing, state repression, state-led agrarian modernization, and neo-authoritarian development populism. I focus on the effects of these mechanisms on evolving conceptions and practices of politics, development, and community among township inhabitants. In particular, I focused my investigation in the following areas: 1) the narratives and strategies of the revolutionary left and contemporary leftist organizations in rural villages; 2) the application, symbolism and narration of state violence, both past and present forms; 3) how the state conceptualizes and implements infrastructural development, individual assistance, and individual capacity building programs; 4) the effects of these mechanisms on evolving conceptions and practices of politics, development, and community among township inhabitants; and 5) responses of rural Mayans, such as: endorsements, reconfigurations and resistance. I locate the appeal of neo-authoritarian politics in the ways that state strategies have rearranged the conceptual and affective terrain upon which Mayans collectively struggle for economic security, personal dignity, racial justice and autonomy. I describe how neo-conservative politics gain traction from the ways that state violence and state development programs

resonate with and reshape Mayan conceptions and practices of politics, development, and community.

This is not a primarily ideological transition akin to the ideal enshrined in the North American imaginary of democracy. Highland politics is a series of visceral appeals in a game where life itself is what is constantly at stake, and in which life itself is understood by Mayans as threatened, fragile and in very short supply. Mayan authoritarianism is a contingent outcome of Mayan struggles for a better life in a constant state of risk. State strategies seem to have succeeded, at least in part, in pitting Mayan pursuit of well-being against their collective political agency. Instead of united in struggle against the state, Mayans compete for state resources. Many simply look out for themselves. Neo-authoritarian politics thrive upon the most odious effects of racialized counter-insurgency mechanisms. Rather than ideological support for Ríos Montt, pervasive cynicism, fear, vulnerability, divisionism, and disrespect have led some to seek recourse in his party, which specializes in providing first aid for victims, many of whom are of its own making. I read Mayan authoritarianism as a symptom of social upheaval wrought by an ongoing counterinsurgency apparatus.

In this dissertation, I locate contemporary Mayan conservatism in relationship to the broader dynamics in the opening and closing of spaces for Mayan political agency in the following interrelated spheres. The first is the field of *political narratives*. In the late 1970s, many Mayans were hopeful about possibilities for social reform represented by the revolutionary movement and its promises of economic and racial justice. The revolutionary narrative embodied many Mayan understandings of how politics should

and could be made to work. I also examine how memorial practices and conditions shaping the contemporary circulation of discourses about the political past frame this revolutionary past and shape contemporary politics. These rewritings are intimately connected with *political affect*, by which I mean Mayans' sense of the efficacy of their own collective political agency. I emphasize both active and reactive forms. Next, I am concerned with local *desires for development*. This includes both *sense of self* and *definitions of well-being*. In speaking about sense of self, I am concerned with how one identifies socially, ways of distinguishing between persons, how one conceives of who one really is, their personal habits and beliefs, including notions of intelligent, moral or normal behavior and the forms of ethical and managerial relationships that one cultivates with ones' self and with others. In using the term well-being, I refer to the types of political and consumption practices one needs to engage in to survive, to be secure, to be comfortable and to be distinguished. The fourth area is *community*. Here I mean not a seamless egalitarian unity, essential ethnic identity or bounded cosmovision—these never existed, and to the extent and in the manner that they did, form part of an irrecuperable past—but a shared sense of belonging and acting together based in reciprocity, language and kinship and shared experiences of discrimination, poverty and political struggle (Handy 1984a, 1994; Stepputat 2001; Watanabe 1992).[16] A convergence of these configurations formed the ground for reformist politics in late 1970s (Grandin 2004, McAllister 2003), and therefore these constitute privileged frames through which to evaluate transformations in rural Mayan political culture.

FACING THE FUTURE WITH A BROKEN HEART

Guatemalan history in the twentieth century reads like a tragedy without an ending. In 1954, the Eisenhower administration, through the CIA, sponsored a coup against the democratically elected President of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz, who had begun to nationalize the fallow holdings of the United Fruit Company (UFCo) and distribute them to the peasantry. Whether to protect UFCo investors, or to fight international communism, or both, is unclear. What is clear is that the coup reversed the agrarian reform and criminalized and radicalized political dissent, initiating nearly four decades of the dirtiest and bloodiest internal war in Latin American history. In the mid 1970s, Marxist guerrilla organizations, inspired by the Cuban Revolution and the life and writings of Che Guevara and undaunted by the recent military defeat of leftist *campesino* organizations in eastern Guatemala, smuggled themselves across the border from Mexico with the dream of stirring up Mayan support for an armed confrontation with the state (Payeras 1983).[17] Their promise was land and liberty for *los pobres* (the poor). They saw land poor, starving, and socially marginalized indigenous as natural revolutionary subjects, prime material in need of ideological education and combat training.[18] Indeed, many Mayans, some already politically seasoned by their participation in the Democratic Revolution, participated enthusiastically (Grandin 2004, McAllister 2003).

The Guatemalan internal war, especially the period of *la violencia,* is a limit case in the intensive use of violence and surveillance to crush an internal enemy. State counterinsurgency programs had two overarching objectives: to crush the revolutionary movement in Mayan villages and build a new, non-threatening rural Mayan political

culture, non-revolutionary, apolitical and identified with the state (Schirmer 1998). In the same motion, counterinsurgent strategies aimed to separate Mayans from the guerrilla movement by conditioning life itself on political obedience (Schirmer 1998). Enraged, the army resorted to a campaign of massacres to instill widespread fear in the population. On March 23, 1982 Ríos Montt took power by military coup. In a strategy known as *Víctoria '82*, adopted in June of that year, 'good' Mayans were spared from violence and became eligible for benefits and protection in the same move. Ríos gave an infamous speech in which he offered rural Guatemalans a choice between *"frijoles o fusiles"* (beans or rifles). After he offered amnesty to those willing to renounce the guerrilla, the army unleashed its full fury in the Mayan highlands.

After a first wave of violence, many more Mayan sought protection from the *Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres* (the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP) and later the *Organización de la Población en Armas*, (The Organization of the People in Arms, ORPA) who claimed to be able to defend them from the army (Stoll 1993, Falla 1992). Seeing their plan backfire, the military decided to pull out all of the stops to achieve their objective of spreading shockwaves of terror throughout the entire populace. With extreme cruelty and a callous disregard for human dignity or for differences between civilians and combatants, the Guatemalan army set out to raze rural villages, massacring, torturing, and raping Mayans suspected to support the guerilla (REHMI 1998, CEH 1998, Falla 1992). Military planners, using information garnered from local spies and captured prisoners, marked communities with red pins on a war map indicating their "infection" with communism, and marking them for extermination (Schirmer 1998). Some 1.5

million refugees fled, some into the mountains, some to neighboring Chiapas, Mexico, taking only what they could carry in their hands, often leaving people behind to die (Manz 1988) where most remained for the better part of a decade.

Communities in the mountain, known as the *comunidades de poblacion en resisténcia* (communities of populations of resistance) the CPR's were hunted. The military strictly controlled the trade of salt, attempting to drive them out. Anyone found transporting salt would be tortured, interrogated and them killed. A friend of mine from the CPR described to me how only newborn and sick infants would receive a dab salt on their tongue. In the space of two years, over 75,000 people were slaughtered; including 626 communities destroyed entirely, the houses burnt to the ground and all of their valuable belongings stolen (REHMI 1998, CEH 1998). In the entire war, 75,000 Guatemalans were disappeared, taken away and never seen or heard from again, and the truth commission estimates that 200,000 were killed, 80% of them Mayans. The military denied any knowledge and operated with complete authority and impunity for decades. Civilians comprised the vast majority of those killed in the *tierra arrasada* campaign. Military age, or at least sized, Mayan boys were grabbed in military raids, and shuttled into the military. There they were "remade" into soldiers, often by way of torture and humiliation, and regularly forced to commit atrocities.

Shortly after the massacres, in the summer of 1982, the army ordered villagers to form civil patrols. Officially these were 'voluntary' organizations; but whoever did not participate in the patrols was labeled as an enemy. This warped reality—at once a massive human rights violation and a recipe for driving the violence into the recesses of

village life—ordered Mayans, on threat of death, to hunt down their own neighbors, a strategy which not only broke the back of the insurgency, but led to a huge number of civilian casualties and (Krueger and Enge 1985, Smith 1990a, Kobrak 1997). Making villagers responsible for policing their own neighbors amplified the threat of certain violence exponentially. The patrollers also drew civilians deeper into the violence. In some towns, guerrillas and civil patrollers battled it out, creating many martyrs and bitter enmities on both sides. The bitter legacy of social polarization still smolders. The civil patrollers shut down open political discourse almost immediately; no one could be certain who was and who was not a spy, who was or who was not a guerrilla, and who or who was not trying to accuse who or kill who for being one or the other. Anyone could denounce anyone to the military. Many sent their neighbors to the military zone for personal revenge, like a simple land conflict. In addition to the civil patrols, displaced populations were rounded up and organized into "model communities" where their houses were arranged in a grid-like formation to facilitate surveillance (Schirmer 1998, Nelson 1999). While under military control, thousands of monitored residents were subjected to ideological re-education and introduced into dependency relationships with the military.

Guatemala began a transition to democracy in 1986, ratifying a new constitution and democratically electing Vinicio Cerezo their first president since Jacobo Arbenz, albeit to a state still run by the army. Reform was on its way. Reformist factions in the Guatemalan Government, mostly members of the landed elite, wanted to shed pariah status and rebuild their economy opted for a slow democratization and devolution of

military authority (Smith 1990a). In the early 1990s negotiations began between the URNG The Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity and army generals. These led to the Peace Accords, which, while limited, promised unheralded reforms of the military, society and the economy and a new era of political openness.[19] The Patrols were disbanded, troops were redeployed from military garrisons to the *zona militar;* and the army itself was to be civilian controlled. Human rights were now to be protected, including rights to education and economic welfare. The Accords located the causes of the war squarely in historic social and ethnic inequalities, and included an accord that called for the recognition that indigenous groups have the right to practice their identity. Guatemala was officially a multiethnic, multilingual and democratic nation.

When negotiations were barely underway, refugees from the mountains and from Mexico returned by the thousands, staging a dramatic march through Guatemala City in 1993 (North and Simmons 1999). Since the Accords, many new groups have taken a visible leadership role in civil society, espousing ideas that before would have led to certain death, such as human rights, strong criticisms of the government; and even open revolutionary organizations were invited to participate in the *apertura* (democratic opening). This has included a much different look at the past. Also notable were the Guatemalan Truth Commissions, the *Comisión de Escaramiento Historico*, (CEH) which provided the nation with a horrifying look at the scope of the violence and wrote a condemnation of the counterinsurgency into official national history (CEH 1998). The CEH shocked the nation with the conclusion that genocide had been committed. Another report, REHMI, published soon afterwards by the Catholic Diocese, gave further

contextualization on the human cost, and went further to assess blame: 97% of the massacres, it found, were committed by the army, a stark contrast to the army's official line that "both groups" were responsible.[20] In 2000, the first national election after the Peace Accords, the National Guerrilla Unity party (URNG) won numerous mayoral races in the highlands and elected several representatives to congress.

Also stepping into the national spotlight was the Pan Mayan movement (Smith 1991; Bastos and Camus 199, 2003; Cojtí 1997; Fischer and Brown et al 1996; Warren 1998a). Pan-Mayanism revalorizes all things Mayan in their diversity, including languages, architecture, agriculture, philosophy, poetry, notion of community—each viewed as elements of what Pan Mayanists refer to as their *cosmovision*. A key symbolic victory for this movement came in 1992, Rigoberta Menchú won a Nobel Peace Prize for her activism, including her book *I, Rigoberta Menchú*,[21] which describes her coming into revolutionary consciousness as a young indigenous girl and documents state violence against her family.

Several Mayan organizations have emerged, many with wide following and their own publications. Many rural Mayans are becoming literate in their own languages. Mayan activists also had an important, if unofficial, role in the political coalition to support the Peace Accords, and shaped their final language of the Accords, which calls for sovereignty for Mayan communities, whose distinct customs and practices, such as legal practices deserve recognition from the state. The Accords initiated a sustained national dialog about how to include the highland Mayan population in a democratic polity. Young Mayan children now learn in bilingual schools that now teach in Mayan to

help them learn Spanish. They also stipulate Mayans access to communication technology, such as radio and TV stations. There are several signs that the Pan Mayan movement continues to grow as more young Mayan professionals emerge and encounter and feel harmony with these ideas, disseminated by literally dozens of state, non-state, and international institutions and organizations, including many local organizations, each with their own particular visions of Mayan identity and culture. In a process dubbed *Mayanización* rural Mayans have come to identify themselves as Mayan, as opposed to *indígena*, indicating a collective consciousness. One small sign of this change is the common practices among young Mayan couples to give their children 'Mayan' names. Mayan power is unmistakably on display in highland Mayan communities, most of which are now run by Mayan mayors. In the early 1990s, conservative political parties sought Mayan candidates for their parties, promising them power and development.

There is also a growing feminist movement in Mayan communities (Blacklock 1999, Torres 1999). Women's organizations have sprouted up in almost every town since the signing of the Accords, which included substantial language about women's rights, although, many have noted, not an accord specifically addressing the dilemma of Guatemalan rural women.[22] Women's collectives call for women's rights to speak their minds, to participate in community governance, to receive an education, to live free of violence, and to decide their reproduction, along with the rest of rights usually assumed only to pertain to men. Many women have started economic cooperatives and participate in a growing number of development projects directed specifically towards women. Instead of a 'foreign' transplant, Mayan feminism is homemade, an outgrowth between

local notions of gender complementarity and political experiences during and after the war (Copeland 2005).[23] Basic ideas about women's equality are espoused by a majority of all women, regardless of political alignment.

In the meantime, fledgling democratic reform efforts have hit a wall. Authoritarian populist parties—especially the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG), led by the ex-dictator, general Ríos Montt—have derailed the Peace Accords while implementing the standard package of neoliberal reforms that have deepened poverty in the highlands (Jonas et al 2001, Jonas 2002, Robinson 2000, 2004). Not everyone in Guatemala supported a democratic transition. FRG leaders include many generals and colonels who did not want to negotiate the Peace Accords with a "defeated enemy."[24] Members of these groups still voice vehement opposition to the Peace Accords, UN 'interference,' and human rights. In addition to blocking the Peace Accords, including constitutional amendments legalizing many of the substantive measures just described,[25] these parties use political power for myriad anti-democratic purposes, including: impeding the prosecution of many military officials—including Ríos—of charges of genocide and war crimes; exorbitant military spending and military secrecy; continued operation of illegal death squads; targeted repression of social movements; outrageous acts of corruption and negligence; and even drug trafficking. The FRG 'administration' was a military-narco-kleptococracy of the most fantastic extremes; and even out of power they still do much as they please with impunity. Octogenarian Ríos Montt is seeking protection from his Spanish arrest order by running for the president of congress, where he will enjoy legal immunity.

Strangely, this nefarious party's main base of support comes from war-tattered and impoverished rural Mayans, including many who had previously fervently supported the revolutionary left. The Guatemalan left, despite its new legality and persistent following in several rural Mayan towns, is fragmented, with their leftist parties, social movements and NGOs generating little following in the highlands.[26] This diverges sharply from the trend sweeping across all Latin American, where rejection of neoliberal economic policies, especially in countries with strong indigenous movements, [27] has shifted power to a new left. What makes Guatemala different?

GUATEMALAN APARTHEID

Centuries of colonial governance in Guatemala have produced a racialized topography of power, the most unequal in the western hemisphere.[28] Comprising somewhere between 50 and 70 percent of the total population, indigenous have existed simultaneously inside and outside of the nation-state. At the end of the 19th century the mantle of colonial control passed from the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church to internal elites. Creole nationalists, dedicated to replicating the dreams of modernity in the new world, did not end colonial relations with the country's indigenous majority; they intensified it. Racialized dispossession enabled racialized exploitation. In the 1870's, Liberal president Justo Rufino Barríos drove Mayans off productive coffee land and instituted a system of forced labor (Handy 1984b).[29] At the same time, the state empowered rural Ladinos as an intermediary class in rural towns, giving them the

responsibility of contracting indigenous labor and town governance, thereby creating a bulwark between the state and Mayans (Smith 1990c). Guatemala's indigenous population, along with others throughout the New World, have been periodically exterminated, systematically enslaved and exploited, frequently raped and reviled, and occasionally assimilated ever since the arrival of the Spanish (Smith 1991, 31).[30]

Instead of trying to make Mayans into modern citizens—the purported goal of colonialism elsewhere—Guatemala's Liberal governments in the 19th and 20th century followed a line of separatism and inequality more than *mestizaje*. Rather than assimilaion, their goal was to freeze Mayans in their communities, maintaining their 'backwardness' and hyperexploitation (Taracena 2005).[31] *Mestizaje* describes the national project of the democratic regimes (1944-1954), which had a fundamentally Liberal view of race and assimilation, and therefore did not address founding inequalities, and whose reforms were largely swept away by the counterrevolution (Hale 2002). These contradictions have led to generations of political mobilization from Guatemala's indigenous population. A high point in this mobilization was during the late seventies, when decades of Mayan local activism encountered the guerrilla movement. Out of the ashes of counterinsurgency violence, new Mayan political organizations emerged, demanding both cultural and material rights. Today, Mayan politicians dominate highland politics as representatives of right wing parties.

SAN PEDRO NECTA

San Pedro is in many ways a typical Mayan town in Huehuetenango. It is located in the foothills of the Cuchumatanes mountain chain, not too far from the Inter-American highway. San Pedro is only an hour and a half from the southern border of Mexico. Sampedrano Mayans are Mames, Mam being the Mayan language, one of 21 in Guatemala, spoken in this region of Huehuetenango. Most Mam speakers are bilingual, an important condition of possibility for my research. The majority of Mayan Sampedranos live in poverty or extreme poverty. The population of about 35,000 is bi-ethnic. Ladinos (Guatemalan *mestizos*) comprise about 8% of the population and live concentrated in the town center. Indigenous tend to live in villages, where most live off a combination of subsistence farming, cash cropping, and day labor. Economic and cultural differences between the two groups are vast. Ladinos have both economic and cultural dominance of indigenous, although this pattern has been altered as more indigenous people enter the middle class and political authority. Living for almost a year and half in San Pedro, an entire year in 2004 and two subsequent trips, allowed me to examine the micro-practices that comprise the interplay between governance and rural Mayan political organizations. I was able to map two generations of Mayan politics in San Pedro with some detail: organizations that emerged in the immediate wake of genocidal violence; and a new generation of Mayan leaders, who has begun to challenge the authority claims of the prior generation of leaders.

AFTER GOVERNMENTALITY

In order to reframe Mayan support for neo-authoritarianism in San Pedro, I draw on a combination of the writings of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. Although there is a fundamental tension in the types of analytical questions posed by each approach, they have many similarities, and holding their perspectives in tension can enhance our understandings of how political power operates in diverse contexts (cfa Moore 2005, Hale 2006, Hansen and Stepputat et al 2001). I will ride both of these horses to get an analytical grip on Mayan neo-authoritarianism.

Governing Populations

Foucault's writings focus on how power operates in the constitution of political fields and political subjects. Foucault defines governance as the "conduct of conduct," all attempts to regulate human conduct for political ends. He locates the emergence of the problem of governance in the 16th century. Central to the art of government is the notion of economy, first defined as "the correct way of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family" (1997, 207). Foucault argued that the aim of power is not primarily to repress, but to produce; governance operates through the formation of subjects, the directed deployment of their agency.[32] Agency is not opposed to power: it completes it. Foucault identifies two poles of power. The first was disciplinary power or anatamo-power. This form of power works directly on the body, shaping it, training it, and directing its movement (1979). Microphysical control of the body is achieved though careful deployment of punishment and rewards and detailed forms of training. The

second pole of power identified by Foucault was 'bio-technical" power, which refers to the means through which "life, and its object, come into the realm of technical manipulation' (1980, 101). Power is multiple, discontinuous, and distributed throughout society; it is exercised as much through organizations in what we think of as the non-state space of civil society as much as through the state itself.[33]

Foucault identified an important transformation in the ways that states were administered in the 18th century with the emergence of the population, a "datum" made visible through the compilation of statistics. The art of government was no longer tethered to the will of the sovereign, or focused on the family; it was now directed to the higher cause of defending and multiplying the life forces of the population (1997, 217). The population becomes both target and object of governmental intervention:

> In contrast to sovereignty, government has its purpose not in the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.; and the means that the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all in some sense immanent to the population; it is the population itself onto which the government will act either directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through the techniques that will make possible, *without the full awareness of the people,* the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc. (217) (italics mine)

No longer limited to giving or taking life, power in modern societies operates through shaping and regulating bodies and populations, investing and arranging them, normalizing them according to idealized visions of "life" (1980, 144). It entails attention towards the imbrication of "men and things" in their minute relations (1997, 211). Governing a state requires the pastoral caretaking over "each and all" of its citizens. In

addition, these same processes brought to light "new networks of continuous and multiple relations between population, territory and wealth," resulting the emergence of the "economy" as in independent field of intervention (217). This re-centering of governance around the population did not displace sovereignty or discipline; instead it intensified them by giving them a more rational ethical basis and a more compelling justification: "in reality one has a triangle, sovereignty-discipline-government, which has its primary target the population and its essential mechanism the apparatus of security"(219).

Throughout modern history, there has been a sustained multiplication of mechanisms—techniques, maps, calculations, institutions—designed to expand the ability to manipulate and regulate individual and group behavior from increasing distances and in increasingly minute detail. The ends of government have also multiplied. Governance, then, entails the calculated deployment of discipline and regulation order to render subjects visible and to make their activities function smoothly within larger regulated systems for the welfare of the population. The achievement of modern society, in Foucault's opinion, is its ability to align the desires and interests of individuals with the interests of the population (1979).[34] Instead of a narrative of progress, Foucault critiques the spread of a society based on normalization.[35] Foucault sees a real danger in that the "underside" of this power to promote life, is the power to deny it.[36] The needs of the population are held in higher esteem than the needs—even the need to live—of some of its smaller or inessential segments. Killing, or taking life, becomes seen as an integral part of "protecting life" at the level of the population.[37] In

Guatemala, the massacre of Mayan revolutionaries was seen as "vital" to protect the dominant race, whose way of life is coterminous with the Guatemalan social order.[38]

Foucault's observations have opened a new field of studies of the history and transformation of different regimes of governance (Burchell et al 1991, Miller and Rose 1993, Barry et al 1996, Rose 1999, Dean 1999).[39] My work combines these perspectives with the work of post-Foucaultian scholars who examine new regimes of control, including: various models of 'community' governance (Rose 1996); state-multiculturalism (Goldberg 1994, Brown 1995, Povinelli 2002, Hale 2002); control of memory (Hacking 1995, Trouillot 1995);[40] and the formation of 'enterprising' selves (Ali 2002, Barry et al 1996, Burchell 1996, O'Malley 1998, Rose 1996, Rose and Miller 1993, Gupta and Ferguson 2002). Often these approaches are called "neoliberal."[41] I examine how all of these forms of control operate and produce effects in synergy with less sophisticated, but equally or more effective, forms of social control such as violence and surveillance. I examine how 'neoliberal' forms of control open and close spaces for grassroots and Mayan political action alongside authoritarian mechanisms of rule.

In spite of the Eurocentrism of Foucault's analysis,[42]many theorists have shown the operation of modern regimes of power in colonial and in postcolonial contexts (Ali 2002; Chatterjee 1993; Mitchell 1991, 2002; 2005; Scott 1995; Stoler 1995). Rather than positing a universal experience of colonization, Scott (1995) focuses on the "historically constituted complexes of power/knowledge that give shape to colonial projects of political sovereignty." Scott wants to examine on the "specific power effects of race" within particular regimes of colonial rule. He also suggests that:

> The political problem of modern power was […] not merely to contain resistance and encourage accommodation but to seek to ensure that *both* could *only* be defined in relation to the categories and structures of modern political rationalities. (196)

In this view, modern power operates through "concerted attempt[s] to alter the political and social worlds of the colonized"(214). This involved the "disabling [of] old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and with constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable—indeed, so as to oblige—new forms of life to come into being" (193).[43] Chakrabarty (2000, 2002) amplifies this point, arguing that normalizing and secularizing visions of the political, rooted in Eurocentric visions of history, close spaces for other ways of being human. These authors focus our attention towards the ways that the civilizing mission continues to operate after official de-colonization.

From this perspective, many authors see development as the primary means through which postcolonial subjects are governed and through which colonial relations are maintained and reproduced (Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1995, Crush et al 1995, Gupta 1998, Mitchell 2002). Escobar argues that the very notion of the "third world" is a product of this teleological discourse that normalizes global economic asymmetries as the temporal lag between 'developed' and 'underdeveloped'.[44] Development labels existing forms of life as backward and attempts to replace them with western 'modern' norms for economic and social life, bodily discipline, medicine, and worldviews (Escobar 1995). These political and civilizing effects may have little to do with the stated aims and objectives, but are built into the deep structure of the political technology itself.

Analysis from the perspective of governmentality is a nuanced view of coercion as a set of techniques that work on the body (violence, surveillance) and the political field (governance) to open and close spaces for subjectivity. Power operates in the very demarcation of political subjects and through defining what is and is not to be contested by politics. And, by refusing to focus solely on the 'state' Foucault makes visible the exercise of power for multiple aims, overlapping forms of control that traverse the left and right, good or bad distinction.

However insightful, this approach has some clear disadvantages that make it insufficient to the task of understanding what is at stake in social movements. Work from this perspective examines the structuring of the political field, but has little to say about the consciousness of agents on that field. It assumes that governance is always one step ahead, defining the terms of resistance. [45] Agency is *always* an effect of governance; movements are always already absorbed and neutralized. Thig ignores huge gaps between planning, implementation and outcomes. Smooth operation of government, especially in the postcolony, is the exception, not the rule. Furthermore, the focus on multiple overlapping regimes of power can obscure struggles over the major axes of social domination, and can in some cases reinforce domination along these lines.[46] In a neocolonial context like Guatemala, the state and political economy are key terrains of social struggle, and civil society is a crucial space for the formation of organized resistance to neo-colonizing and militaristic nationalist projects.

Hegemony and Cultural Politics

In order to focus on the dynamic inter-relationship between movements for cultural rights and counterinsurgency strategies, Foucaultian perspectives on power must take a backseat to a theory of hegemony as proposed by Antonio Gramsci.[47] Gramsci (1971) wanted to understand how political economic inequality is maintained. He saw that states, by which he meant the sum totality of the dominant class, dominated marginalized classes not only through brute force, but also through universalizing ruling class values. Power operates through both 'domination' and 'intellectual and moral leadership' (58). Coercion shuts down demands that are impossible for a ruling block to fulfill without collapsing. Moral leadership is essential to maintaining power once opposition movements are liquidated. Here, the state plays the role of "educator," a role that consists of numerous attempts to persuade the masses that the dominant vision of reality is correct, normal or inevitable. Dominant ideologies depict oppositional worldviews as 'not-in-conflict' with the dominant social order. Hence ideology cannot be simply derived from class position. This reframing is symbolic violence. Education occurs both at the level of abstract and formal ideology and of practical consciousness, or commonsense (Hall 1986, 26-27).[48] A perspective is considered 'hegemonic' if its basic premises are so taken for granted that they go without saying.

For Gramsci, hegemony is never achieved once and for all, but is a constant and always incomplete negotiation between rulers and ruled who are engaged in a struggle in civil society (Gramsci 1971, Dagnino 1998).[49] Social inequalities always come back to haunt dominant power structures by generating oppositional consciousness if not

organized resistance. Thus, cultural struggle is a contest of values. Because collective interests cannot be derived from objective location in the regime of production, conscious reflection is necessary. Gramsci views 'organic intellectuals' – intellectuals from oppressed classes—as necessary leaders to educate a counter-hegemonic bloc, united around political struggle against the dominant class. In cultural political struggles, Gramsci places agency with the subaltern, who always resists, counter-strategizes and maneuvers, even while absorbing many aspects of hegemonic ideology.

Populism is a specific form of hegemonic strategy, in which a political discourse that constitutes the social as antagonistically divided between the 'people' and the 'power bloc' and claims to defend the former against the latter (Laclau 1979, 2005).[50] The key moment in populism is the discursive constitution of the 'people'. The 'people' is an "empty signifier," effective precisely because of its openness, which gives it the ability to articulate to a wide range of subjects.[51] If a decisive number of political subjects see themselves and their interests in the constitution of 'the people' a populist interpellation is successful. Populist interpellations are not limited to rhetoric, but actual political demands. Populism has no proper class character; it can be used to articulate political subjects to either the dominant mode of production or to oppositional movements. Populism is not risk free for dominant groups however. There may come a point when too much ground is given to populist demands, and the social order itself comes into a more direct challenge. Therefore, populist regimes on the right are unable to be fully populist and must constantly backtrack.[52]

A Gramscian approach limited in that they tend to focus exclusively on political economic struggles instead of the structure of the political field on which those struggles occur. It also tends to downplay how power operates on the body (ie, in non-ideological ways) and often ignores the role of agency in completing regimes of power. Furthermore, Gramscian analysis offers little insight into how power operates through spatial control, or through the categories and practices that comprise "civil society."

A Hybrid Approach

There are broad similarities between Foucaultian and Gramscian approaches to understanding Mayan conservatism. Where Foucaultian perspectives would see neo-authoritarian consolidation as effective governance, Gramsci sees effective hegemony. Both orient our attention directly to the question of how power operates to produce subjects. Although their notions of how these processes work differ markedly, they are complementary. I propose a hybrid approach that combines a Foucaultian focus on how overlapping, decentered regimes of power/knowledge produce normalized bodies and spaces for agency with a Gramscian emphasis on political economic struggle, the education of consent by the state, consciousness, and the possibility for resistance and empowerment.

Where Gramscian analysis would focus on the question of how right wing governments gain a political following, a Foucaultian approach shows continuities in forms of governance between right and left, bringing to light multiple and overlapping regimes of truth and knowledge, each pursuing their own type of normalization. A

combined approach would maintain a focus on what is explicitly contested in political struggles, as well as what is taken for granted in them. Where Foucault orients our thinking towards forms of spatial control and broader strategies, a focus on consciousness might provide more insight into how people experience it and how and why these techniques succeed or fail. Furthermore, combining both Foucault and Gramsci would, ideally, neither ignore or romanticize agency; rather it would promote an examination of the spaces for possible thought and action made possible through different types of action, never assuming that either power or agency is completely guaranteed once and for all. A combined approach focuses on governance and agency as dynamic, relational and discontinuous processes. This research proposes genealogical examinations of the conditions under which governance operates in particular cultural and political contexts, and by tracing the way that its meaning and function changes in relationship to its linkages with evolving forms of desire, power and subjectivity. It calls for the location of development discourses within specific political contests over colonial rule—forms of power and forms of anti-colonial resistance.

My research compares state multiculturalist strategies to responses by Mayan political actors engaged in grassroots identity politics in order to clarify differences in ideology, practice and aims. By riding these two horses at once, I reveal the interconnectedness and non-commensurability of race, class and gender oppression as well as various dimensions of disjuncture between Mayan, state and neoliberal visions of citizenship, self and community. I argue that genealogical and ethnographic research from both perspectives is needed to make sense of a phenomenon like Mayan neo-

authoritarianism. I show how new, divided identities and administrative categories formed during the counterinsurgency and by development programs and projects coalesce into governable social divisions; the ex-PAC is only the most visible example.

The benefits of a combined approach become clear in discussions of development in the rural highlands.[53] With Gramsci, state development would be seen as a material concession to social movement demands and vital to the survival of Mayan communities, albeit certainly a vehicle for official nationalisms (Brow 1997; Woost 1993), and depoliticizing ideologies (Ferguson 1990). Foucaultian analysis would question how development structures the political field of action, reshapes prior political demands, transforms existing subsistence practices, creates differently configured subjects with new investments, forges productive linkages between state and community, and even restructuring intra-community relationships. It would show there is much more than ideological and respresentational politics at stake. They are also not external to national level politics: in fact these other forms of politics form the basis of unlikely and unpredictable political strategies. Yet a hybrid approach would encourage us to see the state as responding to and acommodating Mayan desires, in addition to trying to shape and direct them. My research examines how different forms of development produce governing effects within hybridized neoliberal-colonial regimes of governmentality and how these are accommodated, resisted redeployed and desired by subaltern groups (Cooper and Packard 1997, Crush et al 1995, Edelman 1999, Gupta 1998, Pigg 1993, Watts 2003). The question for a combined perspective then would be how to decolonize

the forms of development necessary for Mayan social reproduction and in line with their collective political struggles.[54]

This approach produces several insights of that form recurrent themes in the dissertation. First, the cultural politics of representation and the efforts to structure the field of representational politics are dialectical and mutually conditioning processes. The distinction between these remains important analytically, but does not exist in practice. Second, I see resistance as prior to power. It is thus important to affirm subaltern resistance as the motor that drives governance. But it is just as important to examine how regimes of governance mine the array of resistance strategies to formulate new regimes of control. At the same time as affirming state responses as affirmations of subaltern agency, we must pay close attention to the subtle, but important differences between the two approaches and the way official alternatives are linked to power. Next, analysis should also pay attention to shifts in the political field over time. As contexts change, and forms of resistance calcify, they can produce unintended effects on subaltern political strategies, which are often difficult or impossible to keep unified across generations.[55]

POLITICAL IMAGINARIES AND POLITICAL AFFECT

The Gramscian conception of 'consciousness' needs further unpacking if it is to be useful ethnographically. To complicate this somewhat reductive understanding of human consciousness I add a focus on the political imaginary. At the same time, I want to flesh out Foucault's notion of the body with a theory of affect. Recent research define

the social imaginary not as a rational, internally consistent or fixed system, but also the vast and shifting repository of concepts, narratives and common-sense understandings of social and political reality, woven into everyday life, through which fields of objects, forms of subjectivity and patterns of social relations become intelligible, desirable and practicable (Castoriadis 1987, Gaonkar 2002). These imaginary frameworks mediate all of social life and political life. It is not enough, however, to recognize the frames through which, as Mitchell (1991) puts it, subjects "manufacture the real," the real not being available 'outside' of or apart from discourse; we also need to examine how they are affective, that is, how they articulate to subjective desire. As Begoña Aretxaga (2000) contends: "our political imaginaries and the violence that accompany them are characterized by and entanglement of discourse and desire that needs to be examined rather than taken for granted, because it is this entanglement that constitutes political realities" (63). In this conception, desire is drives the exercise of power and resistance, fueling the narratives that define the specific objects and agents in each process.

My research focuses on the ways that governance and hegemony operate through the refashioning of political imaginaries and affective states (Anderson 1983, Suarez-Orozco 1985, Brown 1995, Rose 1996, Berlant 1997, Ivy 1997, Taussig 1997, Taylor 1997, Sigel 1998). Governance works to generate, resonante with and reshape the forms of affect that generate political action at the same time as it rewrites the central narratives through which people experience their lives and constitute social and political identities. It inserts itself into everyday life and generates new frames of reference. By remaking the political field, it attempts to make active forces become reactive. Power is

experienced as a lived intensity, and emotion, or an investment. A theory of drives and fantasies focuses analysis towards the ways governance is guided by non-rational as well as rational ends, and how it works on the body to produce intensities, investments, excitement or fear. States are nervous bodies politic incited by imagined crises to make the risks of disobedience known and felt among potentially unruly subjects. These produce lasting effects on the bodies, identities, and affective states and investments among governed populations, effects that can be made visible through ethnographic attentiveness.

My research inquires into the relationship between the manner in which rural Mayans imagine the state as an object of fear and desire their collective sense of empowerment and their shared narratives of political agency. From this perspective, I revise ideology-centered theories of populism, arguing that the resonance of neo-authoritarian populism among rural Mayans derives from the effects of counterinsurgency mechanisms on the spatial, conceptual and affective landscape upon which Mayans constitute their social and political identities. Of all the major political parties, the FRG is the most adept at generating, identifying and placating aggrieved groups; their political strategies are a cross between voodoo and brain surgery. The FRG transforms itself into a source of redress for the poverty that it creates, for feelings of backwardness, and, in some cases, for its own crimes against humanity. But the state remains a benefactor to be feared as much as desired.

METHODOLOGY AND POSITIONING

I lived for 14 months in San Pedro Necta, and a particular amount of time in a village I will call Los Altenses. I gathered data about how state violence is targeted, symbolized and narrated from mass media depictions, oral history interviews, eyewitness testimony, human rights reports and through discussions with government officials. I refined my understanding of the long-term effects of violence on popular conceptions and practices of politics through observations of local political processes, interviews and conversations with rural Mayans and Mayan leaders and with surviving family members and friends of Mayan war victims. Witnessing the mourning and memorial practices of family and friends and carefully observing how the state and local agency is figured in public discourse provided additional insights. Interviews with development agents, research into policy documents and observations showed how conceptions of the state, Mayan agency, community, and progress are built into program administration, pedagogy and organizing narratives. They also revealed the channels, actors and conditions through which programs were implemented.

Participation in and observation of everyday life and local political processes along with oral histories and interviews with politically active Mayans and non-Mayan *mestizos* revealed how conceptions, practices and narratives embedded within development programs filtered into local consciousness and meshed with local common sense, expectations and forms of knowledge and practice. I learned how subtle but nonetheless significant changes in local discourses, practices and emotions related to politics, self, and community and how shape different forms of political participation.

These methods allowed me to discover what development and advancement have come to mean to rural Mayans and how they respond favorably, unfavorably and creatively to different aspects of the programs and to their different effects. Close observation and interviews also clarified the relationship between the manner of the delivery and administration of infrastructure and assistance programs and inter and intra-ethnic political divisions. I tracked the political careers of the two most important Mayan politicians in San Pedro since the 1990s, and examined the political currents that each had ridden to power. I investigated the milieu in which they operated, moving between the villages, town politics, and state institutions and practices. Slowly and unevenly, I was able to piece together fragments into a backstory to these politics, reconstructing their conditions for possibility and assembling a history of the present.

When I first arrived in San Pedro, I didn't know anyone. No one I could talk to openly at least. I had worked for two years as an investigator for the left-aligned NGO *Asociación* CEIBA. I collaborated with CEIBA and leaders of a rural Mayan women's organization from the town of Colotenango. Colotenango is a 'revolutionary' town where the URNG has won local elections since 2000. When I went to San Pedro to study state development strategies, I was worried that my previous work with CEIBA would make some of the people in this right-wing town think that I worked for the revolutionary organization, and that they would therefore be unwilling or afraid to work for me. I was even worried that something bad could happen to me, especially if I were seen as a spy.

Many people had warned me to be careful given the political nature of my research. Some agronomists from CEIBA already lived in the town. A couple from

Belgium, working as agronomists, had worked there for several years. There was a replacement group of agronomists now, another Belgian named Tom and a young Q'anjobal woman from Barillas, a town in the north of the department. There was also a local Mayan woman involved in CEIBA's women's programs, Guadalupe Mendoza. I knew they were in town, and they knew I was going to be there; but we had agreed not to meet openly for fear that I would be 'exposed'. Guadalupe was the person that I talked to before I arrived in San Pedro to find out names of people who I should talk to. Guadalupe had a solid grasp of the political landscape. Once in town, I kept my public contact with her to a minimum. We had agreed only to meet outside of the town, most often at the home of a mutual friend of ours in Huehuetenango.

When I first got to San Pedro, I rented a small room at a hotel in the town center. San Pedro has a hospital, founded by the Catholic Church and later taken over by the state but still on Church owned property. This hospital meant that people from all over the region would come to San Pedro from treatment, hence the need for several modest hotels. The young Ladino family who ran the hotel I stayed was fun, and the father was active in one of the large political parties. I decided this would be a good place to start to get to know the town. My plan was to follow up on the leads on local Ladinos, then, as that part of the picture came into closer focus, decide which village or villages to live in for an extended period.

After I had lived in the town center in San Pedro for two months, with several extended stays in outlying villages, I felt more secure and resumed interacting with my friends from CEIBA. This raised several eyebrows, and I was asked several times by

locals if I was working with CEIBA. But I soon realized that CEIBA was not a source of suspicion for people in the town, at least not openly, and not the majority, who saw them as simply another organization working in development, one of the dozens who had descended on San Pedro especially since the signing of the Peace Accords. Even some FRG supporters participated in their programs.

My identity as a North American was both a limitation and an advantage. Walking in communities never ceased provoking laughter and chants of *gringo*. Young children, especially in the more distant villages, were often terrified at the first sight of me, scared that I was a *cholero* (baby stealer). Several people thought that I worked for the US government, or for the Guatemalan military. Many times I felt jealousy, which is intense and palpable against *gringos*, who are universally seen as rich and pampered. Certainly, many people refused to speak to me on the basis of my origin. Luckily for me, however, Guatemalans—Ladino and indigenous alike—are also fascinated by the United States. After all, most have friends or family members who live there. They want to know how much it costs to travel there; what it is like to live there; what we eat (You don't eat tortillas, only bread, right?); what marriage meant to us (It's just for two years, and then you divorce?). I patiently answered these questions and many others countless times. Over time I was able to make many friends who very generously shared their perspectives with me. Being a North American also allowed me great flexibility in maneuvering within Ladino society, where association with me was a sure sign of cultural capital.[56] I was also much more free to speak and interact with Mayans than are most Ladinos. One Mayan friend told me, after we had a long discussion over dinner,

that he enjoyed the fact that I could come and visit in his house. "Ladinos *can't participate with us. They can come to the door, but they can't sit at our table and eat.*" This sad insight reminded me of the privilege I enjoyed by not inheriting the racial divisions in Guatemalan society, which run much deeper than any individual and form very real barriers for relationships.

Studying counterinsurgency strategy in a post-conflict society is rife with difficulties, both practical and psychological. My research brought risks to me, as well as to my research subjects. Much of the data presented in these chapters implicates individuals in criminal acts. Many people were afraid to speak to me about their political participation, especially during the late 1970s. Several told me that they were afraid that after speaking with me their name would appear on a list, and that there would be a consequence. I was incredibly careful not to talk to others about what one person had told me. It seemed, however, that the effects of the violence on public expression have thawed enough to allow a level of historical inquiry that heretofore has been impossible. The discussion of San Pedro's history constitutes perhaps the most important contribution of this research.

Research in a post-crisis context like Guatemala places specific ethical burdens on researchers. It is impossible to remain neutral in the face of extreme violence and social control. In addition to calling attention to human rights violations that I encountered, and the everyday operations of power to which, as an ethnographer I was especially well-positioned to identify, I wanted to produce knowledge that would be useful to grassroots Mayan political organizations. This research is activist in that its questions were

formulated in alignment with Mayan movement activists, locally and throughout Guatemala, in their struggle against state and colonial power. This includes many young professionals, many of whom eagerly devoured popular Spanish language versions of my research findings. I also publicly presented my work in San Pedro. Furthermore, this work provides a map of governance and state effects that can assist in local political actors reflections on the pitfalls and spaces of opportunity in state strategies. By providing ethnographic detail of the micro-practices though which social and political reality is reproduced and contested, my research points to alternative political futures and diverse ways of being human. A main goal of this research is to show the limits of neoliberal multiculturalism, particularly its complicity with colonial governance. In particular, it also orients our thinking towards political alternatives resonant with Mayans' sensibilities, responsive to their immediate need for resources, and consistent with their long-term struggles for racial justice and community autonomy.

Completing this project required experimenting with new ways of doing fieldwork. Some of my methods might be described as disrespectful or even hostile by those more accustomed to traditional ethnographic approaches. Others might find them based in an ethics of respect and accountability that transcends the typical relationship between ethnographer and informant. In addition to soliciting and recording individual's narration of events, I found that questioning people's public representations—at times even challenging them outright—can produce a level of candor otherwise unobtainable. I found that this candid approach ("you don't expect me to believe *that*, do you?") helped break down a naïve assumption that we as ethnographers often question, but rarely do

anything about: that informants tell us things that they feel are comfortable and convenient for them, not necessarily what they really think or feel. This method also reproduced, however imperfectly, the situation of disagreement and debate that I found to be endemic when doing research on politics in the San Pedro.

ARGUMENT AND CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS

I found that the majority of rural Mayans in San Pedro Necta either sympathized deeply with or participated enthusiastically in the revolution, despite deeply felt criticisms of their strategies and their cultural politics. Even today, most Mayans in San Pedro, and in Huehuetenango more generally, share a Marxist-inflected poetics—a mix of indigenous and revolutionary nationalism embedded in communal and familial struggles for dignity and well-being. This imaginary is characterized by a deep feeling of distrust for the state and multinational capital. It is informed by an insight that racial and economic oppression are intimately interlinked. I explore the emergence and of this political imaginary in Chapter 1, "Indigenous politics in San Pedro, 1944-2003," which documents Mayan engagements with national and local politics.

These shared, often taken for granted, ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in relation to politics provided the basis for revolutionary politics, post-genocidal organizing, and even today transcend the most divergent party affiliations. However, state violence and state development programs have transformed the affective, conceptual and material bases of revolutionary politics, and created new forms of political agency.

Far more than any ideological shift, I argue that it is the convergent effects of these strategies—some unpredicted—on the conditions of possibility for Mayan political agency that give traction to neo-authoritarian politics in Mayan communities. These strategies have created the conditions under which neo-authoritarian politics became appealing in to differently constituted and differently positioned Mayan subjects. This research elucidates several conditions of possibility for FRG and conservative political dominance in Mayan communities, including some that have been overlooked. I describe several 'paths' to authoritarianism.

The first path concerns memory politics. State repression and efforts to control the truth regarding history has fostered a widespread lack of awareness and understanding of past political struggles among current Mayan politicians and in the general public. Mayan politics is largely imagined as separate from class politics. In Chapter 2, "The Slow Uneven Thaw of Imposed Truth," I explore the conditions under which Mayans remember themselves as 'caught between two armies' and never having participated in the revolution. I locate the emergence of this narrative in Mayan attempts to articulate a criticism of state violence during military occupation and of guerrilla strategies that left them vulnerable. I also show how this narrative legitimates specific identities (as victims, as intelligent), and how this narrative is appropriated for political purposes.

State violence also plays a role in shaping the trajectory of postrevolutionary Mayan politics. In addition, the re-invocation of past violence through persistent attacks on social movements sustains a collective fantasy of the state as an implacable obstacle to reform. This convinces many Mayans that far-reaching social reform and the Peace

Accords in particular, while desirable, remains impossible, and that pursuit of state-sanctioned alternatives, while limited and problematic, is in their best interest. I show the operation of this vampiric state imaginary in Chapter 3 "¡*Que se vaya* MOSCAMED!" which examines the affective and narrative formation I call "revolutionary pessimism". It also examines the conditions of emergence of a conspiracy theory regarding the USDA's program to stop the spread of the fruit-fly at the southern border of Mexico. This chapter also calls into question the legality of this program, and highlights its harmful health and economic effects on rural Mayans.

Furthermore, state agrarian modernization programs further destabilize the revolutionary narrative. Discourses and practices of individual capacity development, '*capacidad,*' promoted by state agrarian modernization programs undermine some of the central tenets of the revolutionary narrative regarding the origins and causes of poverty as well as the available and effective political alternatives. These discourses work to make revolution seem unnecessary for many Mayan activists who were the leaders the postwar generation. In addition, discourses of *capacidad* also generate a new form of discrimination among Mayans, and a monopoly on village leadership positions for people considered more developed, or *capacitado*. These dovetail with an FRG strategy to recruit people (men) who desire leadership roles, but have been systematically marginalized in their villages. There are important ideological and non-ideological differences between Mayans who participate in neo-conservative movements and those who follow FRG politics.

I take a historical and genealogical perspective to gain perspective on the contemporary Mayan politics of capacidad. Chapter 4, "Greening the Counterrevolution", analyzes the imaginative constitution and implementation of Guatemalan-USAID cooperative development programs in the early 1970s. This chapter uses declassified documents to describe how development planners believed cooperative led agrarian modernization would satisfy Mayan desires for well-being within the dominant social order. I argue that this mix of banality and naïveté generated optimism that entrenched opposition to political reforms and set the stage for violent confrontation between state and guerrilla forces. Chapters 5 and 6 examine how Mayans' selectively responded to state agrarian modernization programs, technologies and training according to their own notions of development, self and community. Chapter 5, "Making DIGESA," focuses on Mayan immediate responses to the program in the late 1970s. In Chapter 6, "*Nos falta capacidad,*" jumps ahead to the present to show how development practices and categories have filtered unevenly into local understandings of self and social world. People categorize themselves and others as "*capacitado*" (developed) or "professionals", while some "don't want to develop" and others have "gotten ahead". Investments in these identities are produced through different habits of consumption, personal discipline, and self-management. Chapter 7 "Re-imagining Mayan Politics through *Capacidad*" explores how notions of *capacidad* have reshaped Mayan political movements. Development responded to desires for economic well-being and gave moral resonance to local Mayan contestations of Ladino power in the period after extreme violence. However, this enshrined personal development as a pre-condition for Mayan

inclusion in national life, depoliticized poverty and created local forms of discrimination. Chapter 9 "Revolt Against *Capacidad*?" brings the chapters on development back around to the central puzzle, focusing on how discourses of *capacidad* led to the community divisions later exploited by the FRG.

Perhaps more important than all of these other conditions which make neo-authoritarian politics thinkable for many rural Mayans is the politics of project-centered development. I argue that state-led community development programs are constituted by violence and extend its effects. Aid is conditioned on the norms of political passivity defined by state violence, and serves as a reminder of the consequences for disobedience. Conditioning assistance reinforces the sense of powerlessness established by state violence, defines projects as the sole political objective, and focuses desires for well-being on the state. The regularity and inadequacy of individual assistance programs transform widespread economic insecurity into widespread feelings of dependency on the state for survival. Politicizing insufficient development also fosters a conception of politics as a zero-sum competition for limited resources, refocusing political energy on enervating political divisions. However, Mayans from across the political spectrum voice resistance to favoritism, the failure of projects to combat poverty, false promises of aid, and divide and conquer strategies that reproduce neo-colonial relations. Neo-authoritarian parties capitalized on widespread anger over many of these issues to win San Pedro's local elections in 2003, only to exacerbate the problems on their watch. I make these arguments in Chapter 7, "Violent Development and Community Autonomy," which examines Mayan responses to the proliferation of development programs that have

become the primary zone of contact between post-genocidal rural Mayan political organizations and national political entities as a result of the new cycle of public works projects that were initiated with the 8% municipal tax in 1985.

Each of these processes contributed to the conditions under which neo-authoritarian politics became desirable and thinkable for rural Mayans; but none of them could settle the issue of who was in control. Governing strategies and techniques produced effects, but do not always work in the same way that state planners had expected. Sometimes they produce the opposite of their intended results, or no results. Politically organized Mayans resisted, accommodated and embraced state and revolutionary strategies according to local constructions of need, risk and their strategic reading of the political field. In some cases, they clearly directed events. The long *duree* of the Mayan movement resistance has caused a progressive, from the authoritarian to the democratic, flexibility in governance strategies. These spaces contain affects, narratives, and practices that form ample conditions of possibility for new forms of political agency with the power to transform Guatemalan society, and also to create novel forms of sovereignty, identity, and development—elements of a future autonomy.

NOTES

[1] Weeks later, four journalists from the *Prensa Libre* were taken hostage by some of the same civil patrollers when they arrived to report on a demonstration of ex-PAC that had taken over Puente Cable, blocking the highway *Inter-Americana*. They were beaten, threatened to be burned alive with gasoline, kept overnight, then released the next day when the government fulfilled their demands and promised payments For a full report on the harrowing events at Puente Cable, see the *Prensa Libre* November 3, 2003. http://www.prensalibre.com/pl/domingo/archivo/domingo/2003/noviembre03/021103/central.html). This article includes narratives by each of the hostages taken that day. The

press described this kidnapping as a central part of FRG strategy, *Prensa Libre* October 28, 2003

[2] Q=*quetzal* the Guatemalan national currency, named after the national bird. 1 US dollar =approx 7.5Q

[3] For a recounting of the day's events see Prensa Libre July 25, 2003. *"Jueves Negro: Turbas del FRG Causan Terror en la Capital."* Events that day were dramatic, closing down the city. TV reporter Hector Fernando Ramirez died of a heart attack running from the crowd after attempting to rescue his friend from attack. Several party leaders were charged with social disturbance and had to pay fines. Ríos Montt, who some argue orchestrated the protests, was exonerated.

[4] The new ruling held that the law banning ex-dictators from the presidency was not 'retroactive' and therefore did not apply to Ríos.

[5] For a discussion of FRG 'vote buying' tactics see *Prensa Libre* October 19, 2003. Another article in the Prensa (October 28, 2003) gives a run down of FRG strategies, starting with the inscription of Ríos Montt.

[6] In the first round of voting for president of the republic, Oscar Berger (GANA) won 47.46%, Alvaro Colom (UNE) 26.38%; and Ríos Montt (FRG) 11.21%. (*Prensa Libre* November 10, 2003)

[7] See *Prensa Libre* November 11, 2003. For a discussion of the FRG's continued power see *Prensa Libre* November 13, 2003 *"Ofrecen fuerte oposicion"*

[8] *Prensa Libre* November 13, 2003 *"eferregistas lideran en alcaldias"*. GANA had only 69, followed by UNE with 33, the PAN (Partido Avanzo Nacional) 31. These gains were largely a result of votes in the rural highlands. The results for *municipios* in highland departments are as follows: In Huehuetenango, the FRG won 10 out of 22 elections; San Marcos, 5 out of 29; Totonicapan, 4 out of 8; Quetzaltenago 9 out of 24; Quiche 13 out of 21; and Solola, 5 out of 19.

[9] This is characteristic of the dearth of studies of right-wing political movements in Latin America more generally (Edelman 2001). In Guatemala, there is a good reason for this gap: such research is dangerous, for both researchers and participants, and has been more dangerous in previous years. Only now are the conditions emerging for detailed investigations of the long-term effects of counterinsurgency strategies on Mayan politics. Guatemalan anthropologist Myrna Mack was stabbed 13 times in Guatemala City, presumably for research she was conducing into the ideological education taking place in the 'model communities' that Guatemalan army set up in the 1980s to reorganize displaced Mayans villagers. It is certain that this study done in San Pedro Necta could not have taken place as easily in some communities that experienced more extreme levels of violence during the war, and therefore remains more socially polarized. An example is Nebaj, in Quiche. Unfortunately, there is a tendency of post-conflict research to concentrate on areas where the 'most' violence occurred. While this might have reasons, it certainly presents a difficulty for trying to get a sense of the entire highlands.

[10] Truth Commission reports, for example, describe how state violence disarticulated the guerrilla movement from its rural Mayan base, silenced all public political opposition, and overwhelmed the population with intense feelings of loss, despair and powerlessness.
[11] The strongest rendition of this argument comes from Victoria Sanford (2003). With a shrill and suspicious tone, she says that the symbol of the FRG, a white hand, is also the same as the name of a paramilitary group, the *mano blanco*. However, Sanford misses the fact that the FRG hand is not white, it's blue, and its fingers are a like a loose victory sign. Everyone I spoke in San Pedro recognized this and did not confuse it for a paramilitary group. Another friend of mine, a left-leaning Ladina intellectual in Huehuetenango, suggested that instead of a victory sign, the FRG would more accurately be portrayed by a gesture in which the thumb is inserted between the index and middle fingers in a closed fist—a common symbol for a vulgar act.
[12] This depiction of Mayans as pure victims that results often says more about the people working in solidarity movements and some social scientists than it does about Mayan politics.
[13] Annis' argument is mostly speculative, based on analysis during the early 1980s. There is little empirical evidence for the fit between the rise of Protestant belief among Mayans and support for Rios Montt. Did Mayans see Rios Montt's Protestantism as credible? Annis also tends to conflate Protestantism with an elevated class position. This might or might not be prevalent across the highlands. There were even more modernizing Catholics at the time. He also assumes a tight fit between Protestantism and political ideology and participation. This is not the case in San Pedro Necta, or across Guatemala (Garrard-Burnett 1998). It means that Mayans also ignore the findings of the Truth Commision reports of the UN and the Catholic Church. The idea that a "new moral center" sustains Montt does not explain current support for Montt among Catholics, especially now that the Catholic Church has taken a stand against Rios Montt, calling him an assassin and holding him responsible for genocide.
[14] There is little to suggest that the internal cultural politics of the FRG have departed much from the racist mentality. One notable example was when Rigoberta Menchu went to the Corte de Constitucionalidad CC to dispute Ríos Montt's candidacy. In the tribunal building, she was accosted by nearly 200 FRG supporters and party leaders who yelled insulting racist slurs including, *"Dirty Indian!"; "Go sell tomatoes in the market!"* and "*India hija de puta!(*Indian son of a bitch)*"* Dr. Sam Colop, the indigenous linguist and outspoken editorialist, regularly denounces, in powerful language, racism in the FRG and in the state in general.[14] A less egregious, but probably indicative, moment of FRG racism was witnessed by a friend of mine in Mayan town of Todos Santos Cuchumatanes. Members of the FRG departmental and national leadership came for a rally and a luncheon, the latter hosted at a local hotel. While the Ladino leadership ate their lunches on the sunny patio area of the hotel, enjoying the view of the mountains, the indigenous mayor and his indigenous supporters ate cramped together in a small front room. Most Mayans I spoke with, regardless of political affiliation, felt strongly that all

the parties were racist. Indeed, in San Pedro, many regularly denounce Montt as a *genocidio*.

[15] This dissertation follows other have oriented our attention towards the multiple, overlapping governing mechanisms that aim to reshape the terrain of Mayan politics (Green 1999; Hale 1996, 2000, 2002, 2006; Kobrak 1999; Manz 2000, 2004; McAllister 2003; Schirmer 1998; Smith 1984, 1990; Smith et al 1991; Sandford 2003; Stepputat 2001). Finn (2001) discusses how a number of forces, including the church, the army, the guerrilla, development institutions and the villagers themselves have converged to constitute villages as spaces of governance. He envisions the stabilization of property ownership, community membership and public symbolism as the key features of this process of "villageization"—which has increased significantly since the end of the armed conflict and has altered rural Mayans' relationship to the state. This analysis is persuasive, but more research is needed that explores differences between approaches to development and local forms of resistance to these processes, as well as participation in them. Differences between approaches may significantly impact the types of political criticisms that emerge from these spaces, the inclusivity of these processes with respect to women and poor populations and the political affiliations they foster. My comparative study builds on and addresses these lines of inquiry.

[16] My understanding of community has also grown through many interesting conversations with Ab'jee Jimenez, Mayan-Mam.

[17] The guerrilla first arrived to the Ixcan, a recently populated region, where hundreds of land poor, mostly indigenous families from different locations throughout the highlands, had immigrated to start a colony with the help of the newly formed INTA (National Institute for Agrarian Transformation). This population was working with the assistance of Padre Woods, a Maryknoll from the US, who had assisted with the formation of the Cooperative Ixcan Grande. The local leaders, part of the EGP, the *Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres*, began raising consciousness about a revolutionary movement to divide up the land in Guatemala and forming community bases with the Ixcan settlers. Payeras provides an intriguing first hand account of this group of revolutionaries' experiences in the Ixcan, For an equally intriguing textual analysis of this work, read Revolutionary Imaginary in Latin America in the Age of Development by Salvador-Portillo (2003)

[18] Several members of this initial group were indigenous. See Payeras (2003)

[19] Several activists and scholars critique the Peace Accords as insufficient to deal with the national problems of economic inequality and the concentration of power in the military state. Green (1999) argues that, "because they did not address the indissoluble link between structural and political violence, they in fact reinforced exploitation, marginalization, and powerlessness. At the root of the accords are two key contradictions: the fundamental paradox between democracy and capitalism—the ideology of equality alongside persistent and deepening social inequalities under a free-market model. Secondly, the accords ignore the extent and strength of the military project—reinforced by ongoing impunity." While I agree with the spirit of this critique, I think that the political effects of the accords open spaces for political thought and action

that cannot ultimately be controlled by the military project. Achieving the accords would not necessarily consolidate a regime of power, but could open spaces for even deeper reforms.

[20] Two days after issuing this report, Bishop Juan Gerardi, the director of the REHMI project, was found dead in his home, bludgeoned to death. An intentionally botched investigation followed, as well as an official misinformation and smear campaign.

[21] The rest of the title is "and this is how my consciousness was born"

[22] Women are regularly excluded in their homes and communities, and are therefore subject to multiple, overlapping forms of oppression, as poor, Mayan, rural and women.

[23] In my recent study of Mayan women from the town of Colotenango, I found that women participants in the programs of *Asociación* CEIBA-a left-aligned NGO, were much more likely than non-participants to consider themselves equal to men, to valorize their own labor, to recognize their own right to freedom from abuse, and to participate in making decisions in their homes and communities.

[24] FRG party leaders tend not to be business elites, but many plantation owners and nouveau elites from military backgrounds. Ríos Montt grew up in San Rafael Petzal, a rural town in Huehuetenango, until he entered the Escuela Politecnica in Guatemala City. Their base consists of military junior officers, and, before their turn to populism, a large proportion of the urban and Ladino middle class.

[25] Reforms were already slow to come under the Arzu administration (1994-1999). Constitutional amendments to implement many of the far-reaching elements of the Peace Accords were voted down in a popular referendum in 1998. I suggest that this electoral outcome is related to similar processes that I am describing in this dissertation.

[26] Communities of *retornados* (returned refugees) are commonly assumed to be aligned with the left and therefore encounter ostracism and hostility. For a wide ranging discussion of Guatemala's returned refugees in the early post-Accords era see North and Simmons et al (1999.

[27] I am thinking of Ecuador and Bolivia. There are many cases of conservatism among indigenous groups in Latin America. Many *miskitu* in Nicaragua supported the contra army against the Sandinista, and many Mapuche in Chile supported Pinochet.

[28] I am indebted here to Moore's insight (2005) that territory is a product of historical power relations, not an always-existing backdrop.

[29] Labor was always in short supply for the plantations. Liberal governments in the late 19th century made little pretense about their efforts to block the efforts by the church to safeguard communal land claims to land and to protect Mayans from hyper-exploitation in the fincas. Church authority was reduced, including the removal of all pastors from rural areas. Landed class pushed through forced labor laws mandamientos, requiring each Mayan man to carry a book, that had to be signed by plantation owners. Villagers went to great lengths to avoid work on the plantations, which started with a brutal and sometimes deadly walk to the coast, and then long hours with poor food and inadequate shelter. Arevalo's regime eliminated the mandamientos. After 1954, the military government of Castillo Armas did not revert back, but only because, by that time the

growth of the Mayan population and corresponding demand for money, created a labor market favorable to the plantation owners.

[30] Carol Smith aptly describes the asymmetrical pattern of state Indian relations as follows:

> The general state policy has been to target Indians for work, ignore their "backward" traditions, allow a few of the more "civilized" to become Ladinos, and brutally mow down any who pose a direct challenge to Creole or Ladino dominance. The general Mayan response has been to push for economic advantage wherever openings or weaknesses exist, Mayanize useful Western imports, and eject the assimilated from their communities. Mayans rarely pose a direct challenge to state power; they limit it through economic and cultural diversification.

[31] This historicization is crucial to understand why it was thinkable for the Guatemalan government to lay waste, in such a cruel manner, to such huge numbers of their own rural population in the 1980s. Mayans were never full citizens, and their deaths simply did not matter within racist narrations of the nation, and doctrines of national security. Several note how fears of "Indian rebellion" have formed an important part of the colonial imaginary (Adams 1984, Hale 2006).

[32] Foucault identified two "poles" of power used to construct subjects and regulate populations. Disciplinary power was more efficient than previous forms of power, which were inefficient, riddled with gaps and blind spots. Instead, it offered a "microphysical" control. One of the most important techniques that helped close these gaps was panoptic power, which makes subjects visible to disciplinary power. The regularity of discipline and reward encourages people to regulate themselves according to certain conceptions of normal and healthy behavior. Power moves from the body to the soul. Foucault showed that this was more than a model, but a technique that has disseminated widely and has been built into the physical infrastructure of modern social institutions, not only in prisons but also in schools, hospitals and state bureaucracies of all kinds. Intervention focuses directly on life itself, such as health and illness, education, recreation, marriage, the family—each of these fields became open for theraputic interventions. Foucault reiterates the relevance of these poles of power in his later writing on governance.

[33] The question of how to govern a state was only one problem for governance; others included how to govern children and souls. Foucault suggests that we think of the state as a "mythicized abstraction" whose unity we posit as the orchestrating agent behind different regimes of governance. It would be more fruitful to examine how we are governed, and opposed to who is in control of the state apparatus at a given time.

[34] This is what Foucault means when he says that disciplinary power if both 'individualizing' and 'totalizing' (1979).

[35] In his preface to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Foucault says that the "major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism. […] And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini—which was able to mobilize

and use the desires of the masses so effectively—but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire that very thing that dominates and exploits us. (1972; xiii)

[36] Foucault saw modern societies as playing a dangerous game, actually combining two irreconcilable and divergent games: "the city citizen game" of sovereign power, and the "Shepard flock game" of bio-power (Foucault 1997, Dean 2001). The city-citizen is the concern of liberalism, that principle that government should recognize and protect the rights of its citizens while giving them whenever possible, responsibility for their own welfare. The shepherd flock game refers to the pastoral governance of each and all associated with bio-power.

[37] See also Agamben (1998), who refers to forms of life deemed eligible for death or outside of the state's responsibility to promote life as "bare life."

[38] The example that he used in the History of Sexuality was the Holocaust, the extermination of the Jews was viewed as necessary by Hitler and his followers in that it defended the 'true' German population from an outside threat.

[39] Several authors have focused on post-disciplinary forms of social organization, more mobile networks of surveillance and regulation made possible by new information technologies (Deleuze 1989, Hardt 2000). Nikolas Rose (1996) identifies the emergence of modern, enterprising, self out of different "psy-based" forms of regulation. Rose also (1996b) identifies the ascendance, alongside the 'social' and the population, of the community as a target and object of governance. Rabinow's notion of bio-sociality, a new and intensifying process through which identify and form groups primarily on the basis of a new knowledge of their genetic makeup, is one such example. What this field entails exactly is vague, and perhaps rightly so, due to the fact that new methods are being innovated and deployed in different areas, and then passing along circuits that it is the task of current analysis to explore.

[40] Ian Hacking (1995) draws attention towards attempts "to scientize the soul through the study of memory" (5). Hacking clarifies that he does not see the "soul as unitary, as an essence, as a single thing, or even as a thing at all. It does not denote the unchanging core of personal identity"; instead, "it stands for the strange mix of aspects of a person that may be, at some time, imagined as inner"(6).[40] Selves are crafted through the forging of proper memories. He describes the spread of this mode of memory control through the 19th and 20th century psychology and social welfare programs. Also speaking of memory, Trouillot (1995) directs our attention towards the conditions under which historical memories can emerge, thrive and transform opening and closing horizons of "thinkability" which are crucial to the formation of political identities. I will further this research by examining how over attempts to control Mayan behavior by erasing old memories of the past and implanting new ones as part of a vast and dominating counterinsurgency apparatus.

[41] Neoliberal governance is a catch all category that refers to forms of regulation characteristic of free market capitalist societies, including those that operate through 'deregulation'. Instead of focusing only on advanced capitalist societies (Rose 1991),

others emphasize the spread of these discourses through globalization (Gupta and Ferguson 2002). Many have argued that the decline in state regulation does not mean a decline in overall regulation, but a farming out of state responsibilities to other institutions, mainly NGOs in the context of developing countries. What is specific about neoliberal forms of governance is their emphasis on the creation of enterprising, self-sufficient subjects, capable of absorbing and managing risk. This is governance through empowerment, the creation of resilient, market-ready subjects. Central to the process of creating these subjects is redescription of social life in terms of 'choice', ignoring the contexts in which these choices occur (Gordon 1991). Ali (2002), for example, shows the centrality of pedagogical notions of choice to family planning operations in Egypt. He argues that the goal of these programs is not primarily to decrease population size, but to prepare the population for neoliberal structural adjustment.

[42] Many scholars have criticized Foucault and many post-foucaultian scholars for their exclusive focus on western political systems. This ignores the centrality of the colonial experience in the creation of 'modern' regimes of governance (Chatterjee 1993, Stoler 1995). Although unintentional, this optic relegates non-western experience to imitations of something that "happened first" and archetypically in the west, and thereby prevents an apprehension of the irreducibility of non-western attempts to constitute political societies (Chatterjee 1993, Chakrabarty 1993). It also renders invisible an international system of governance that only recognizes political communities constituted as nation-states (Malkki 1995).

[43] He clarifies that in particular he is concerned with the ways that modern power operates through "expanding a range of choice" (4) and creating an environment where particular kinds of *modern* choices are available. For Scott what was specific about colonial governmentality was the way that it "relied on a systematic redefinition and transformation of the terrain on which the life of the colonized was lived" (13).

[44] Gupta (1998) refers to development as "Orientalism turned into a plan for action."

[45] Foucault was very much a philosopher of control, not a philosopher of agency. In his famous essay 'On Governmentality', Foucault writes that the intricate aims and objectives of population regulation take place "without the full awareness of the people". Although the "population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is also the object in the hands of government, aware, *vis a vis* the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it." (217). In this conception, popular consciousness and subjectivity are effects of government, which give it its birth in the form of a population. Populations, in this view, do not constitute their own needs; instead these are prescriptions of planners and agents in remote institutions and are continuous with strategies of population regulation. Governance constitutes populations in such a way as that people's pursuit of their end goals for health, survival, security and well-being is the very means by which their subjectivation is secured. Such a smooth and continuous model of power overstates and overestimates the rationality, continuity, and impermeability of governance. It also precludes politics, understood as the collective

construction interests (Hirst 1997). Despite this pessimism, Foucault's mapping of power relations can be very useful to human agents engaged in political struggles.

[46] In an interview with a French Marxist entitled *Omnes et Singularum*, Foucault defined his own project as not dealing with dialectical struggles between competing forces on the political sphere. Foucault (1997). In this interview, Foucault rejects the idea that although his politics was non-reducible to Marxist concerns, it was not competitive with them. I think he spoke prematurely.

[47] The global proliferation of identity-based movements introduces new possibilities and limitations for social movements and governance. Proponents of new social movements argue that de-centering class politics opens space for a radical democratic project based on connecting diverse axes of social struggle through expanding conceptions of citizenship, rights and of legitimate political actors (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Mohanty et al 1991, Escobar 1992, Laclau 1994, Alvarez et al 1998, Sandoval 1999). Critics, however, impugn identity politics as commodified and easily absorbed (Jameson 1984) and as essentialist, inward looking, and divisive (Melucci 1989, Chatterjee 1993, Appadurai 1996, Gilroy 2000). Povinelli (2002) further warns that state multiculturalism recuperates affective investments in exclusionary nationalisms. And others decry new state strategies that incite identity-based movements to derail class movements (Rouse 1995, Brown 1997) as well as the general tendency of identity claims to displace class based goals from the political horizon (Foweraker 1995, Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). Recent theories, however, reject non-empirical characterizations of identity politics as always either co-opted or liberatory (Hale 1997b). In addition, these critics refuse both the distinction between cultural and material demands (Warren 1998a) and the equation of the recognition of difference within social movements with essentialism (Mouffe 1993). More research is needed that compares state and oppositional forms of identity politics in order to clarify differences in emphasis and outcome.

Most studies of the Mayan movement focus on ideas and actions of leaders (Fisher and McKenna 1995, Galvez-Borrel 1997, Warren 1998). Recent studies of State multiculturalism in Guatemala do not investigate its effects on local political subjectivities (Hale 2002).

[48] Hall suggests that both ideology and practical consciousness are crucial kinds of knowledge "enable people to 'figure out' society, and within whose categories and discourses we 'live out' and 'experience' our objective positioning in social relations." Practical consciousness is the "spontaneous thought" and is therefore essential to the way that certain political ideas "grip the minds of the masses and thereby become a 'material force.

[49] For Gramsci civil society is inherently a space of resistance, for the formation of an alternative consciousness. This is based in his view of the state as a sum total of the social positions of the ruling class. Foucault's dismissal of the state then can be seen as related to his disinterest in class politics, or politics along the more obvious axes of social inequality. Responding to criticisms of civil society leveled by Foucault, Evelina Dagnino (1998) argues for the necessity of the concept in Latin American post-conflict

societies. She argues, roughly, that during the internal wars in the continent, the state/civil society distinction took on specific meanings that give civil society an increasingly important role during democratization, as a space where people need to be taught that they possess the "rights to rights." Hale (2002) makes a similar point. For an informative series of perspectives on civil society, see Hardt (2000) and Calhoun (1998).

[50] As clarified in Laclau and Mouffe (1985) the social does not exist as a given, but must be constituted through discourse.

[51] What comes to represent the people is, necessarily, an empty signifier. Emptiness does not mean non-signifying, but in the ability to signify a diversity of particular demands. Particular demands of heterogeneous groups, due to their non-fulfillment in a given political system, become linked in a conceptual chain of equivalences—as the collective interests of the 'people'—a category given life by the very act of naming itself. This naming has to be vague because demands, despite their being linked together in a chain of equivalences, are particular, and could potentially conflict with one another. Focusing on internal differences—which are inevitable within any amalgamation such as the 'people'—would impede the unification of a populist movement, would break the chain of equivalences. Laclau describes a process of substitution, whereby a particular demand and a particular person (both are necessary in his conception of populism) come to stand in for, synechdochically, for the fulfillment of the demands of the people.

[52] For Laclau, only socialist governments can be fully populist.

[53] Ferguson (1991) provides a similar synthetic argument about development. He argued that development discourse was a machine that extends state power by spreading bureaucracy and surveillance, creating dependency, rendering state authority productive and legitimate, re-organizing populations, and recoding social and political problems as individual and technical ones. While useful, this "machine" metaphor is much more rigid and formulaic than the type of analysis I am proposing here.

[53] Current literature reveals an ambiguous relationship between development and social movements. Some contend that social movements reshape development to encompass the political objectives of marginalized groups (Alvarez et al 1998). Others suggest that development is an effective galvanizing principle for social movements among the rural poor (Gupta 1998). And several theorists advocate a form of development as a means of promoting a consciousness of how oppression operates and of teaching effective modes of resistance (Haraway 1991, Sandoval 1999). Many studies have shown how ideologies of modernization replicate governmental effects of discipline (Guha 1993), class division (Chatterjee 1993) and ethnocentrism (Lloyd 1997) in anti-colonial and revolutionary nationalisms. And Schild (1998) demonstrates parallels between common personal empowerment models used by social movements and neoliberal definitions of citizenship. Few studies examine the extent to which redeployments of development by social movements lead to governmental outcomes. My own research extends these lines of inquiry through exploring how problems associated with development re-emerge in and complicate grassroots Mayan political struggles. Furthermore, in Laclau's clarification of his conception (2005), the identification as people is not simply

ideological, but an affective investment in the political demands and in the populist leader.

[55] See also Wendy Brown (1995). She makes a distinction between resistance and empowerment, the former being more situated and partial, the latter being connected to longer term strategies and practices of freedom.
[56] My friend and colleage Abj'ee Jimenez, a Mayan-Mam from the same region who was doing fieldwork simultaneously in the town of San Idelfonso Ixtahuácan, had much more difficulty in interviewing Ladinos, and encountered significant racism while in the field.

Chapter One: From Hope, through Terror and into Compromise: Mayan Politics and Community in San Pedro Necta, 1944-2006

This is a history of indigenous politics in San Pedro Necta from 1944 to the present. It examines important events in this period and their impact on Mayan communities and Mayan political consciousness and political affect. The importance of community as a vector of analysis is particularly salient in rural Guatemala. The Catholic Church and the Spanish Crown shared a vision of rural Mayan towns as "autonomous and isolated entities" (Handy 1984a). The community structure used to accumulate souls for God and tribute for the Crown, by the Liberal period primarily facilitated the accumulation bodies for labor on the *fincas*.[1] But communities always had their own, autocthonous forms of organization. Mayans shared land communally, supported *cofradías* (religious brotherhoods) that took care of images of town saints, and organized their own internal affairs according to a political-religious hierarchy, led by *principales* (elders) well-versed in customary knowledge (Brintnall 1979, Handy 1984, Smith 1984, Watanabe 1992). Communities closely regulated internal affairs as much as they did relationships with the outside world.[2] Not everyone who lives in rural Guatemalan towns identifies as Mayan or indigenous. Ladinos, a small minority in rural towns, concentrated in the town centers surrounded by indigenous *aldeas* (villages), arrived in the late 1800s, along with liberal reforms. Mayans and Ladinos have a long history of antagonistic relations, with Ladinos enjoying almost uncontested political, economic and cultural dominance. The most devastating aspect of this relationship has been in the form of land appropriations. Sometimes in massive dispossessions, and other times steady encroachment, Mayans have steadily lost land to Ladinos, who enjoyed the decisive

backing of fraudulent legal authority. These enclave-like communities, preyed upon as they were by outside forces—especially the intensive labor demands of the Liberal and post-liberal governments, and earlier with the introduction of coffee under in the 1840s, sustained a particular form of identification that was suspicious of outsiders, especially of Ladinos and the state. Mayan communities have shown resilience, not for the rigidity of these institutions, but for their operation as "fluid sets of community identifiers that helped defend community resources and foster allegiances to the community and its values" (Handy 1984a, 701).

During the tumultuous events of the twentieth century, community-based Mayans have won amazing victories against both the colonial economy and local Ladino authority. They have also suffered terrifying and saddening defeats. These changes have accompanied, and in many cases have demanded, massive, irrevocable changes in community political structures as well as in the socio-political conceptions and forms of participation prevalent among community members. These events do a great deal to undermine perceptions that Mayan communities are simply locally oriented, despite this strong community orientation and group identification. Based on his investigation of Mayan identity in neighboring Santiago Chimaltenango, Watanabe (1992) argues that, in most cases, what has been changed has changed in order so that other elements of community life stays the same. In describing these transformations in community and consciousness, I want to draw attention to the ways that they are not linear, nor predictable, but, rather, as open possibilities.

This chapter identifies significant ideological, affective and structural breaks in Mayan politics and community in San Pedro over the last 60 years. One of the major questions addressed by this chapter is how Mayans responded to the revolutionary movement and why: what their participation meant to them, what these understandings

'did' to them, and what they 'did' to these understandings and what they did with the energies that the revolutionary movement generated. Much of this not-too-distant past remains shrouded in mystery.[3] Decades of military repression have made an open accounting of local history almost impossible. Many of the people who participated most enthusiastically and led the movement were killed by the military or fled to Mexico. And, until recently, those who remain in San Pedro and who know the stories of the war have been afraid to talk for fear of being labeled as guerrilla, or for fear of talking to outsiders who might be trying to gather information that would put them at risk. Mayans still get nervous when they think their name might appear on a list. This history could not have been written ten years ago, much less fifteen. It is a central contention of this dissertation that in order to build a new future it is important that the events of the recent past be discussed by the people who lived it, and the people whose lives remain affected by it in many ways that they may very well not be aware. My primary goal in writing this history is to provide Sampedranos, and people living in communities like it, with a different perspective of this history. The goal is not to create a new "truth" but to encourage a more open dialogue about the past than is currently possible.

DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION 1944-1954

In 1944, Mayan Sampedranos turned out by the hundreds to vote for Juan José Arévalo and his promises of democracy, the end forced labor and land reform. Baudillio Guittierez, a town Ladino and first director of the town high school, told me the story of how, on voting day he secretly rode his horse midway up the mountain towards a spot where several trails that connected the rural villages to the town center converged. As the Mayan villagers passed by on their way to the polls, Baudillio advised them voting for Arévalo would end the vagrancy laws which amounted to forced work orders, and give

everyone land. Baudillio might well take credit for being the first to inform Sampedranos of the benefits of voting for the democratic Revolution, but it is more likely that Mayans needed no additional prodding to oppose the government established by the recently unseated Jorge Ubico. Ubico, the charismatic, anti-communist son of a planter who governed Guatemala by decree since the early 1930s had created mandatory orders to do plantation work on the south coast, where pay was negligible and the conditions often deadly. Every indigenous man had to carry their *libreto* (notebook) with signatures from labor bosses.

Elderly Sampedranos remember with anger and amazement their suffering under the forced labor decrees, in use in some form or another throughout the *altiplano* since the establishment of the agro-export economy in the 1870s (McCreery 1994). Entire families would leave their houses to make the three-day walk, most often barefoot, to the giant banana and coffee plantations on the south coast in San Marcos. Carrying three monts worth of food and clothes with a *mecapal* (tump line), Sampedranos annually joined Mayans from neighboring towns in the region in following a trail that led east from the Naranjales bridge. One of my friends, an eighty-five year old, remembered when his father was walking to coast and got a splinter in his foot the size of a nail, and spent the afternoon howling, trying to fish it out. Mayans also despised the work orders because they robbed valuable time from their own family subsistence plots, which suffered greatly. Workers did not make enough even to sustain their own existence (Ibarra Figueroa 1980). Not wanting to pay their subsistence year round was likely the only reason the planter class in Guatemala allowed indigenous communities to exist. Later, Ubico commissioned free indigenous labor to cut the path for the Inter-American Highway. Falling rocks, illness and parasites killed several Mayans engaged in this

lengthy, treacherous and grueling task. Even though forced labor had been in use for decades before him, many refer to these laws as the *ley de* Ubico.

Beyond their own opposition to such obvious exploitation at the hands of the planter class, it is almost certain that Sampedranos were exposed to the oppositional currents brewing in the rural sector from even before the revolution began. Their migrations to the plantations in the coffee zone of San Marcos placed them in a hotbed of indigenous and *campesino* (peasant) labor organizing that had been brewing for at least a half-century. These groups, inspired by the Mexican revolution of 1910 and the Salvadoran revolution in 1932, had already organized against Ubico (Forster 2001). In fact, this prior organization provided crucial support to the democratic Revolution of 1944, when Juan José Arévalo Bermejo defeated Adrian Recinos (78).[4] Perhaps it is not surprising that Baudillio thought he was the first person to bring this news, since he never made the trip to the coast himself and this history of autonomous labor organizing was occulted after the Counter-revolution in 1954.

The democratic Revolution was the first serious disruption of Mayan community and political consciousness in the twentieth century, besides the grinding effect of agro-export capitalism itself. News of the revolution was cause for immediate and prolonged celebration throughout the highlands. Mayans welcomed the announcement of the right to vote, the right to organize freely and, most of all, the suspension of forced labor. José Arévalo also passed the municipal law, allowing political parties to enter into the town, inviting public debate about national politics. The new regime also sent *misiones ambulantes de cultura*, itinerant groups of "teachers, medical students and representatives of the military and the ministry of agriculture", with the mission of spreading the news of the revolution to far reaching communities (Handy 1984a, 703-4). Grassroots hopes for reform far outstripped the vision of the Arévalo regime, whose commitment to reform

was mainly rhetorical. For example, José Arévalo maintained the forced work laws on the books in response to planter fears about losing the coffee crop. He also used the military to recruit labor and to put down strikes. Despite these limitations, the promises of the Revolution transformed rural politics by introducing new political demands, practices and institutions and fueling hope for a brighter political future free of class and race inequalities. A call for racial justice was at the center of the fervor. In the coffee zone of neighboring San Marcos, movement participants who viewed race as the root the economic inequalities chose inter-ethnic organizing as the natural response (Foster 2001, 139).[5] Almost all of the actions taken by rural *campesino* unions in the first years until Arbenz made the new labor laws in 1948, including organized strikes, land grabs, and union organizing, were done by autonomous local groups themselves, and strictly illegally (Foster 2001). This included mobilizing around issues that were not postulated by the regime, such as land redistribution from local *finqueros*, years before land reform was announced.

The Arbenz regime responded more closely to the desires expressed ever more clearly and urgently at the grassroots. Confident that their goals of agrarian reform and the "integral policy for the economic, social and cultural advances of indigenous groups," would meet with the approval of the rural majority, the *Partido de Acción Revolucionario* formed peasant leagues (Handy 1994, 50). Leagues brought together local leaders and trained them in democratic principles and ideals of social and political justice for all Guatemalans. Such reformist themes were indeed well-received as they spoke directly to the needs of a land starved and politically excluded rural population. Whereas Arévalo maintained these groups in check, even calling the military to force labor into the fields to not lose the harvest of 1948, Arbenz granted unions increased power. Community leaders regularly attended monthly meetings about the new *ley democrática*, as Arévalo's

changes were popularly known, and carried these messages back to their villages. The party was forming leaders in the communities.

The importance of municipal governments for implementing revolutionary policies led "national parties [to] shape themselves around a variety of local confrontations to win adherents" (Handy 1994, 58). Obtaining a local orientation meant participating in ethnic and class conflicts. Handy describes the significance of the particularly violent municipal elections of 1948 as "challeng[es] [to] the local Ladino elite or the traditional hierarchy, often for the first time in history" (58). There was also competition between the peasant leagues and labor unions for followers, increasing the influence of Mayan communities (Handy 1984a, 710). Often these leagues were restrained due to the fears they generated among military and planter classes, always preoccupied by the possibility of labor shortage. Handy describes this period of local ethnic mobilization gave the communities "greater strength and increased internal cohesion" (709). At the same time, however, the peasant leagues did constitute a challenge to community authority, vested in hands of the *principales* and the *cofrades*. Handy also suggests that the growing political autonomy and political boldness of these groups, and the fear that their autonomy and agitation generated about an "Indian uprising," were the main cause of opposition from Ladinos and elements of the military to the Revolutionary governments within Guatemala.

As far as Arbenz went, however, his policies still could not keep up with local desires for reform; and the power of local organizing, which had existed even in the many remote rural areas since before the revolution, continued to increase (Foster 2001, 146). Land hungry peasants, mostly indigenous, continued to push for land from large plantation owners, even those whose land was not supposedly affected by *decreto* 900, which only applied to fallow land holdings. They occupied empty *finca* lands and started

demanding land from Ladinos who had, through a variety of legal and extra legal means, grabbed up a great deal of quality productive land in Mayan villages, especially land suitable for coffee. When I spoke to a seventy year old Ladino from San Pedro about how land reform was understood and acted upon locally, he recalled a massive confusion. In his memory, the indigenous had misunderstood the true application of the law, and people were "stirring them up" by placing false ideas in their head. Many land poor Mayans thought the new law guaranteed them land, which could be taken from *any* wealthy Ladino plantation owner. Recent investigations of rural organizing during the revolutionary period suggests that this misreading of the law might have been instead an accurate reading of the force relations of the newly opened political field (Foster 2001, Grandin 2004). Still, uncertainty about the implications of the new law generated conflict between *municipios* and between *aldeas* over land (Handy 1984a, 714-718). Many communal land holdings were broken up.[6] In addition, the new political parties also encroached on the authority of the community hierarchies (719).[7]

Whatever dreams and expectations for reform inhabited the minds of Mayan Sampedranos, these came crashing to a halt when Arbenz was removed in the coup of 1954. Immediately afterwards the peasant leagues were dismantled and many of the leaders were imprisoned, executed or, like Arbenz himself, forced into exile. Army representatives, with the help of local planters, commanded alcaldes auxiliaries to round up peasant league leaders. One man, an *alcalde auxiliar* at the time, recalls the event. "*We went at night to get people, the leaders of the community groups. We took rope to tie them up. We didn't want to, but they made us as* mayores. *There was a jail in the town, the size of a house, full of people."* After stiff beatings and several months in the makeshift jail, the *calabosa*, these leaders were forced to sign oaths renouncing Arbenz, the land movement, communism and social organization in general. San Pedro Ladinos

jumped on this defeat to reassert their own authority. Several villagers told me story of Ladinos who, after counterrevolution, made rounds to rural villages with a poster of Arbenz, claiming that he had been killed. Immediately after the revolution, planters in San Pedro tried to convince rural farmers that the agrarian reform would have been bad for them. They spread the rumor that land reform laws would cause villages to lose communally held land, that it too would have to be broken up and sold in individual plots of equal size as per the requirements of "communism"—the same story about communism they would tell decades later when the guerrilla was pressuring. While exaggerated, this story no doubt vexed several communities that still had held land communally, especially Ajal, where conflict over control of communal land broke out again in the 1960s. Regardless of the truth, the point was to capitalize on the overthrow of the democratic regime to whatever extent possible in terms of quashing local Mayans' expectations for land reform.

The clamor for land would not re-emerge in a concrete form for another several decades, but that did not exhaust the political repercussions of the democratic period in the intervening years. The resounding defeat of the revolutionary government may have dashed the immediate political hopes of many rural Sampedranos, but it left a powerful mark on their consciousness, especially their conception of what an alternative political order might look like. It had positive and negative aspects, and was definitely unique. If it challenged community hierarchies, it also gave Mayans valuable experience with flexing collective muscles locally and across municipal boundaries, and, possibly for some, of working together with Ladinos for common goals. Most man, and many women, old enough to remember those days describe them with a gleam in their eye that speaks volumes. If indigenous were radicalized by this experience as indigenous, so were Ladinos, many of whom became strident anticommunists as a result of their defeat at the

hands of the primarily indigenous peasant leagues, who locally had begun to question Ladino control of land and politics. These confrontations would intensify due to parallel processes that were already taking hold across the highlands.

RELIGION AGAINST *COSTUMBRE*

The arrival of organized religion had lasting implications for Mayan political participation and community hierarchies across the highlands. In the early 1950s, a Maryknoll priest who came to live in San Pedro, Padre Richard, came to live in San Pedro. Padre Richard selected a number of school aged Mayan youths, young men, to attend special classes in the diocesis in Huehuetenango. These courses focused on church doctrine provoked massive changes in community structures and local identity (Warren 1978). The teachings of evangelical groups were less dramatic, but both churches opposed and undermined the influence of *costumbre*—their shorthand name for the community hierarchy. Although Evangelical conversion started at nearly the same time as the new Catholicism, not until the 1980s would it have a similar reach and influence in community life. The Catholic Church focused its energies not on doctrinal conflicts with Evangelicals, who at the time were few in number, but on a campaign against the power of the *cofradía* system, and to reduce the symbolic emphasis placed on the saints, the use of alcohol, and traditional Mayanized Catholic belief systems and ritual practices—especially the ritual use of alcohol and animal sacrifice—in favor of focusing on the personage and teachings of Jesus Christ. When Padre Richard took over the mass, some villagers were unhappy, but the majority acceded to the new authority without a high level of protest, such as was the case in many other *municipios*. One of the first, and foremost, indigenous *catequistas*, Arturo Ramírez, and the first *sacristan*, reportedly burned 22 of the tables used by *chamanes* or *sacerdotes Mayans* (Mayan priests or

shamans). The *sacerdotes Mayans* kept small tables adorned with candles and other offerings that were used for communication with the gods and divination. Judging from the continued strength of the *cofadia* system, and traditional practices and beliefs in general in neighboring Santiago Chimaltenango, Ixtahuacán, San Juan, and Colotenango, and the relative weakness of these traditions in San Pedro Necta, where there are no longer practicing *sacerdotes* Mayans or *curanderos*, the continual presence of a town priest probably helped greatly the ascendance of the symbolic authority of the new Catholic Church.[8]

If internally to the villages, religious conversion and increasing participation in the market economy meant the rise of a younger group of leaders to displace the age-based community heirarchies, externally it meant breaking the dependency of village authority to Ladinos (Falla 1978, Brintnall 1979, Warren 1978). These studies suggest that without these constraints, indigenous politics within communities were more independent of Ladino control. Abandonment of the traditional hierarchies meant relief from financial obligations in the fiesta system, allowing individuals to save and to invest in market crops. Arturo Ramírez exemplifies the linkage between the move away from *costumbre* and the focus on development. Through his contacts in the Catholic Church, Ramírez received training as a *promotor sociale* in the University of Rafael Landivar and became a spokesperson for the new science of agriculture and for market cropping. The Church also arranged his travel to Houston, Texas. Changes on the symbolic level were probably at least as important, specifically the idea of equality emphasized in both Evangelical and Christian faiths. Indigenous people were children of God, just like Ladinos, and had to be treated as such. This idea—obvioulsy a factor in Morales' brief political success—was strong within the more popular Catholic Church. Another way in which religious conversion affected the social and political thinking of local Mayans was

the committment, common to both religions, to the development and advancement of the indigenous population.

But *costumbre* did not simply go away. The cofradía, although less powerful, still exists and takes care of the statue of San Pedro that is paraded around town on the day of San Pedro. Many traditional practices continue to exist, blending in when not in direct or overt conflict with official church doctrines. Today many people outwardly denounce *costumbre* have abandoned many of its practices especially those concerning drink. As far as I could determine, there are few or no *sacerdotes Mayans* in San Pedro, as there are in neighboring Colotenango and Ixtahuacán. It seems that outwardly people deny religion, especially to strangers who they think will not approve or criticize them; but they cannot help but believe for themselves. At least, in times of emergency, people do not hesitate to hedge their bets. Additional evidence that people still retain a form of Mayan spirituality is the pervasive belief in, and fear of, witches and ghosts, as well as other creatures with supernatural powers. To some extent this is evident in their belief in and use of *curanderos* (traditional healers). Baby thieves, *choleros*, are part of this world. This is different from the Church's perspective, which sees all *costumbre* as witchcraft; villagers see witchcraft as a particular practice separate from *costumbre*, but related to it in the sense that it deals with some of the same supernatural forces that they see to be at play in human events.

LOCAL POLITICS AFTER THE COUNTERREVOLUTION

Spaces for local politics were few and far between in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Successive military governments vigilantly opposed any peasant organization and labor union activity, aided and abetted by rural Ladinos. A brief and partial respite came in 1966 with the presidency of Julio Cesar Mendez Montenego from the *Partido*

Revolutionario (PR). This party was a center-left, even to the right of the *Democracia Cristiana* (DC) but had little power to make national-level changes, as all real decision-making power remained in the hands of the military (Melville and Melville 1971, Grandin 2004).[9] This opening coincided with the decline of the authority of the village hierarchy affected by religious conversion, a process now fully underway. Pedro Morales, an early evangelical, was elected the first indigenous *alcalde* in San Pedro Necta, as a member of the (PR) in 1966. Morales had been at the forefront of the peasant leagues in San Pedro. According to his son, a retired school-teacher who runs a small business in San Pedro, when the counterrevolution came, he counted himself lucky for having been arrested in Huehuetenango, and not San Pedro, where the planters, in his estimation, would have killed him for certain. He did his time—three months—and left unharmed. Morales was also the first indigenous member of the evangelical *Centro Americana* church in San Pedro, and the first indigenous preacher. Little is known about his decision to convert. He almost certainly faced resistance from the *cofradía* system, perhaps less pronounced because he lived in the Ladino dominated town center instead of a village and was, from all accounts, economically differentiated from most Mayans who lived in the villages. Pedro reportedly helped missionaries translate the Bible into Mam, and was also a lay preacher. Two North American missionaries who knew him in those times described him as one of the only indigenous people they had met without fear of Ladinos. Although the rest of church members were Ladinos, Morales moved comfortably within these circles, remaining the only indigenous member of the congregation for several years. Morales had studied to sixth grade level, which at that time was a rare accomplishment, one earning the title of *promotor bilingue*, and much more common among indigenous from the *pueblo*, usually more economically advanced than those in

the *aldeas*. Then, *promotores* taught primary grade school in the few villages that, by the late 1950s, had begun to build schools.

Despite Morales' commitment to land reform, the main issue in Morales' mayoral campaign was not land—that issue was closed by the counterrevolution—but the unequal treatment of indigenous Sampedranos by Ladinos in *municipal* affairs. In those times an indigenous person had almost to beg to get a meeting with the *alcalde*, even after walking long distances. When audience was granted, often on another day, if then, indigenous petitioners had to treat the *alcalde* with even more deference than they would any other Ladino. Attendants made sure that indigenous visitors to the *municipio* removed their shoes at the door. There were also more material abuses. As they had been for decades, local disputes and crimes were resolved with fines and short sentences in the municipal jail. Previously, unscrupulous Ladinos would charge exaggerated fines, enforcing them with threats of equally exaggerated sentences. Indigenous Sampedranos, most who could not read or write, could never prove abuse, making it all the more frustrating. Ending this form of discrimination gave the moral high ground to Morales' campaign, especially among indigenous. Town Ladinos were angry that an indigenous man had taken over the *alcaldia*.

As it turned out, many indigenous residents were also unhappy with Morales' approach to governance. Morales, working as both Justice of the Peace and *alcalde*—in those days the tasks were combined continued to impose fines for small infractions. Before the municipal tax, these fines were the only real source of income for the municipality. Some recall that his decision to continue taxing indigenous Sampedranos represented his 'even-handed' approach—to apply the law equally based on the offense. But many claim that Morales used fines corruptly as a form of personal financial gain. Whichever was the truth, a good many indigenous people resented his liberal use of fines,

and resented the fact that their own mayor was doing the same thing to them as the Ladinos had done before. In the end, it was the local Ladinos, unhappy with indigenous control of the *alcaldia*, who eventually ran Morales out of office. They brought a case against him for cutting down a tree on his own property, making him ineligible to run again. Regardless of this somewhat poetic justice, discontent among indigenous residents made it unlikely that he would have won a second term.

VISIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

Acción Católica (Catholic Action, AC) talked about development, linking the notion to the development of the person through education. The *Promotores bilingües* from the urban center held community meetings with leaders in the aldeas to persuade them to form a commitee to build schools. At one of the first of such meetings, the wife of one of these promotores recalls, *"They almost ran him out with* palos*, (sticks). They didn't want anything. Finally he convinced them. He didn't give up. Then the people liked it. They made a salon of sticks and pajas* (thatch). *Later, little by little they asked around Guatemala for help."* Economic development had not been as a political issue since the Arbenz regime, when it was a broad goal almost drowned out by cries for land and democracy. Padre Richard had brought chemical fertilizers to San Pedro for the first time in the late 1950s. But this was on a very limited scale and the situation was dire. During the corn shortage in Huehuetenango in 1967, many families went hungry (Melville and Melville 1971, 273). Other years were not much better. Padre José Tol arrived in 1970. He began more intense work with the formation of *catequistas* and placed strong emphasis on economic development. Father Tol founded a cooperative named the *Santa Teresita*, which was part of the The National Federation of Savings and

Credit Cooperatives, (FENACOAC) (Gaitan 1972). Ideas of economic development were welcomed by the rural villagers.

The widespread use of new agricultural inputs and of awareness of the benefits of scientific agriculture was made possible by the cooperative system, which, by allowing an economy of scale, lowered their prices for the farmers. Cooperative organizing repressed in the counterrevolution was slowly re-legalized bewteen 1956 and 1959, by president Peralta Azurdia. There were 19 cooperatives in Huehuetenango by 1972, including two in the department capital. Cooperatives thrived in the late 1960s in the meager political openness afforded by the PR presidency of Montenegro. The national cooperative movement was left-leaning, progresive and pragmatic. Local cooperatives introduced a number of new ideas, technologies and practices to community members. The cooperative introduced chemical fertilizers and pesticides at low cost and instructed farmers how to use them. It also taught other agricultural skills, such as seed selection, crop diversification and marketing techniques. Cooperatives also arranged for the transportation of their members' products and gave credit to small farmers and educated their members on savings. There were a variety of other activities and services, including:

> Storage systems; moveable and permanent refrigeration units; fruit classification (by size and weight; paper and plastic packing machines; ovens to dry vegetables; mills for vegetables and spices; silos for basic grains that will hold on average 200 quintales (100 lb bags); 50lb scales; manual machine to tie yute sacks; … (Gaitan 1972, 53)

Hundreds of small farmers participated, from every village. Even those who did not participate in the savings and loan services still benefitted from some of its programs.

Cooperative organizing brought the issue of sustainable, long term development for small farmers clearly on to the political agenda in San Pedro. In addition to exposure to development ideas, the cooperative espoused a very progressive politics, and provided

linkages between local groups and national politics through the assembly systems. Cooperative meetings were spaces where national politics of interest to poor *campesinos* and Mayans were discussed, especially the issue of land.[10] Constant oversight from town Ladinos, many of who were perturbed or threatened by the program, prevented unions from emerging; but the ideas were there. Community leaders underwent constant training and preparation. The majority of their members were indigenous, something their national leadership saw as a point of pride (Gaitan 1972).

FENACOAC cooperatives, closely associated with the reformist Christian Democrats and the Catholic Church, had the aim of lifting people, primarily rural Mayans, out of grinding poverty. They viewed and discussed the basis of poverty as the conditions of land inequality. This dissenting discourse is evident in their monthly publication, *La Voz de FENACOAC,* containing federation news.[11] Cooperative ideas were presented as in harmony with Mayan culture (Gaitan 1972, 57),[12] while at the same time voicing a strong criticism of certain elements of indigenous tradition (58).[13] Furthermore, cooperatives espoused a vision of development aimed at the entire community. Strenthening community was the expressed aim of their credit program, which attempted to "transfer productive credit inside the same community" which the idea that this would "provokes and will provoke essentially in the short and long term the growth and improvement of the community, in the sense that all of the benefits obtained in the increase in production will be captured and transferred in the system of credit-savings for the communities" (53). The cooperative ethos of community advancement was central to the enthusiastic manner in which villagers participated in the cooperative; many villagers saw cooperative teachings and methods as part of their struggle to gain collective and individual equality with Ladinos

In addition to the autonomous cooperative movement, several state programs were created with the goal of developing Mayan communities. One of the first government programs directed towards the well-being of the indigenous population was SFEI, the *Sociedad para el Fortalecimiento de la Economia Indígena*. SFEI promoters—there were three for the entire department, one from San Sebastián, and another from San Idelfonso Ixtahuacán—went from town to town in Hueuhetenango from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s promoting chemical fertilizers and market agriculture (Manz 2004). SFEI's coverage was miniscule however, covering perhaps 1% of the population. A state-led, USAID funded program designed to achieve these goals was DIGESA, which did not arrive in San Pedro until 1978. Community enthusiasm about DIGESA, the *Directoria General de Sciencias Agricolas*—one of the most wide reaching development programs formed part of the *Sector Publico Agraria* in 1970—reveal a strong desire for economic advancement that drove the formation of local cooperatives. DIGESA had many of the same tasks of the Santa Teresita cooperative: it emphasized new chemical inputs, market cropping, savings, and economic risk taking in the form of loans, which were increasingly available to small farmers through agencies like BANDESA, the *Banco del Desarrollo Rural* (now Banrural).

Economic advancement was a slow and painstaking process. The path to development was hard work. Perhaps more important than the economic impact of the program was the ideology. The cooperative was a sign that collective energy could result in substantial improvement in the quality of life. It is also significant that while most of the members were indigenous, many Ladinos campesinos also participated. In fact, this was the one of the only spaces in San Pedro besides the church where Ladinos and Mayans worked together for a united goal. As for the poor Ladinos who pariticipated in the cooperative and DIGESA programs, most seemed not to mind that they shared their

struggle with indigenous, as long as they could reap program benefits equally. Ramírez and other indigenous leaders advised not to work on the *fincas* because of the low pay and the poor treatment. *"you shouldn't have to kill yourself for the boss. Even if you only have two* cuerdas*, it's better to work your own land."* Nevertheless, cooperatives were often taken over by town Ladinos, who, because of their larger land holdings, were better situated to benefit from cooperatives (Warren 1978). Warren indicates that many indigenous cooperativists in San Andrés, a town in the department of Solola, became disillusioned when the gains of cooperativism did not make up for the vast wealth and power differences between the two local ethnic groups (142).

Despite these limitations, the association of development with the idea of indigenous advancement was evident in the hostile reaction of local Ladinos, many of whom misinterpreted them as *"one step away from Communism."* One Ladino planter who lived in the pueblo reportedly told Ramírez, *"If we weren't friends, I would kill you, because now I don't have any mozos (day laborers) to work my land."* Convinced of the importance of their message, Tol, Ramírez and other Mayan leaders continued. Coffee, which before 1970 was planted almost exclusively in the lush *fincas* of San Pedro's northern slope, was by 1970 a cash crop for more and more Sam-pedranos—Ladinos as well as indigenous. Credit from the cooperative helped many farmers invest in land. Others, helped no doubt by the increased production granted by green revolution technologies, converted land previously dedicated to corn production. Many leaders of the next generation still point to the influence and guidance of the Church, the cooperative, and science itself as inspirations for thier efforts to make a better life for themselves, their families, and the community.

CONFRONTING LADINO PRIVILEGE

The decline in the political significance of the hierarchies and the rise of new conceptions of development and equality brought the possibility of openly challenging Ladino political authority in the municipality. It is probably more accurate to say that these processes made this confrontation almost inevitable. There were many signs that Mayan leaders' patience with persistent racism, abuse, and monopoly on municipal power was wearing thin. This growing sense of injustice erupted in several ways. One was a confrontation of the *mayores* system by Francisco Domingo, a *cateqista* and a *promotor bilingüe,* who also lived in the urban center. The *mayores* were the *alcaldes auxiliares* elected from each community every year to do service, free, to the municipality. They would run errands and do different jobs, some of them physically demanding, for the *alcalde*. Reportedly, Pedro Morales had opposed these practices as well. Domingo started speaking against the system in the early 1970s. Word got back to the aclade who asked Domingo if it was true that he was riling up the people. He said that it was. The *alcalde* argued that they need to serve the country. Domingo asked where this was written, asked the *alcalde* to produce the book of laws. When the *alcalde* did not, Domingo said that the law states that the people have to be paid for their work. Defeated in the argument, the *alcalde* refused to give ground. He threatened to jail Domingo, who told him to *"Go ahead, throw me in jail. But tomorrow, all the people will be here. I don't know what will happen."* The *alcalde* made a counter offer, to quiet him, saying that if he would begin to work for them, they would pay him Q50 per month, a healthy salary for the time, when you could still buy a cuerda that produced coffee for less. The *alcalde* did not jail him, however; and Domingo continued his "agitation." Domingo continued to ask difficult questions regarding why educated indigenous, like himself, were free of the labor obligation. Local protagonism over race issues converged

with a limited opening in national politics that allowed for the existence of center-left political parties, most notably the *Partído Revolucionario* (PR) and the *Democracia Cristiana* (Christian Democrats, DC). Although president Mendez Montenegro was somewhat progressive, his ability to pursue reformist legislation was almost completely curtailed by the military and planter elite, both of which saw the advancement of the rural majority a threat to their power, their labor pool, and definitely not worth their tax dollars (Melville and Melville 1971). But only focusing on their national failure misses the types of spaces for ethnic politics opened by these oppositional parties.

The new generation of Catholic developmentalists made their entry into town politics in 1974 with the *Frente de Oposición Nacional* (FON), a coalition that included the DC, the newly formed *Frente Unido de la Revolucion*, and the PR. The Christian Democrats called for the creation of a government founded on Christian principles that would protect indigenous people from abuses and exploitation, and allow them the resources and opportunities necessary to development themselves as equals to Ladinos. Like the PR, were allowed to operate in Huehuetenango during the mid 1970s, and came out in opposition to the Ladino dominated MLN. These parties' calls for national changes were well received by rural Mayans whose desires for advancement had been boosted by the new Church doctine and discourses of development. The DC presidential candidate was Efraín Ríos Montt, a Huehuetecan who had graduated from the *Escuela Politecnica* in Guatemala City, and had been minister of defense under Arana Osorio.[14] According to some reports, Ríos Montt campaigned as a poor person, wearing torn pants and talking about reform for the poor, albeit with little reference to specific details. Ríos Montt won the presidential election but was denied entry by the military government.

The first DC candidate from San Pedro was Jacinto Garcia, a tailor who lived in El Llano, the village closest to the town center. Garcia won 1974 election but was

blocked from taking power by local Ladinos who refused to accept what for them was, at the time, unacceptable: being governed by a indigenous mayor. The land issue, unresolved, remained a source of Ladino-indigenous antagonism. Angered at the growing threat to their political authority represented by the formation of indigenous leaders in the Catholic Church, town Ladinos drove José Tol out of San Pedro. Tol's removal was precipitated by the 1974 campaign. After campaigning in San Pedro, Ríos Montt had an appointment to appear in Santiago Chimaltenango at 3 in the afternoon. Meanwhile, MLN representatives had punched holes in all four tires of his truck. Tol, seeing the injustice, gave him a ride in the church's vehicle. Town Ladinos denounced this as political interference, and used it as an excuse to replace Tol. Ladinos had another reason to be suspicious of Tol. Tol preached liberation theology, a political reading of the Bible as a message of advancement for poor and marginalized peoples. None of this was appealing to planter class town Ladinos, who equated it with communism, a far worse crime than "stirring up" the Mayans with talk about development.

As important as the reformist aspirations of the DC, and the populist discourse of Ríos Montt, a major public issue in the 1974 election, and the issue still remembered today, was a dispute over communal land. Overlooking the urban center in San Pedro is a plateau there is a grassy field about half a kilometer square. It is divided by a cliff, which has another patch of land on top of it. Passing through this land converged several trails that connected the indigenous mountain villages with the town. During town celebrations, such as the day of San Pedro or the town fair in April, indigenous people would tie up their horses and other animals in the field to safely graze while they enjoyed the celebrations, which would often last a couple of days. The land was owned by the municipality, or, that is to say, owned by no one individual. Augustín Herrera, the Ladino *alcalde* at the time, took over municipal land, which was located not far from the

town center and was mostly flat—a valuable anomaly in San Pedro—and had soil quite suited to the planting of coffee. This move was immediately denounced by indigenous leaders—specifically Jacinto Garcia and Alfonso Garcia—a *promotor bilingüe*—who claimed that the mayor had sold, or given, the land to one of his friend, another Ladino, and in the process ruined something that belonged to the entire community. The Garcia brothers began a movement, and were able to gain wide appeal. The Garcia brothers and others organized a protest against the decision in the town square that was attended by hundreds of angered villagers. Herrera's high-handed treatment of the land issue added justification and urgency to the continued desire to have an indigenous mayor.

FROM CULTURAL STRUGGLE TO REVOLUTION

From 1975 and onward, and possibly sooner, political processes in San Pedro cannot be understood outside the context of the guerrilla movement. The EGP was the first guerrilla movement to arrive in San Pedro Necta, followed soon after by ORPA. These groups had a similar message—land for the poor gained through revolutionary struggle—despite their differences. The EGP was both a political and a military organization. Through their clandestine military cell network, the guerrilla worked directly with community members to raise consciousness and to form leaders. They focused primarily on established communities. ORPA, on the other hand, was primarily a military organization. Initially, they focused their efforts in the *finca* zones in the north of the township, looking for young men and women willing to leave their communities and become combatants. After talking to dozens of villagers about the mood at the time of when the guerrilla first began operating in San Pedro, a pattern emerges. Villagers were receptive and curious. A good number of those leaders, or their fathers, had learned

about and identified with the idea of the *lucha de los pobres*, the struggle of the poor, since the democratic Revolution. Many remembered clearly the *campesino* unions of the Abenz regime and talk of land reform. Some had spoken too organizers on the coast, and now were seeing more here in the villages. Many were now very interested to hear that there were armed groups. As villagers received ongoing education from the guerrilla about the nature of capitalist exploitation and their plans for a new regime, they hid guerrilla in their communities, served as their lookouts, and prepared them food.

The guerrilla's message resonated with Sampedranos for several reasons. One of the major factors influencing the guerrilla was the economic situation. Although there were improvements from the green revolution, villagers were terribly poor (Smith 1984, Jonas 1991).[15] Most were already angered by low wages and abusive treatment in the *fincas*. Many were land poor, and some were even landless. The promise to divide up *finca* lands was an enticing prospect indeed. Families were still living in the "sub-subsistence" level. The population had increased dramatically in recent years, and family budgets were strained. Land, while more productive, was becoming scarcer and more expensive. The early cooperatives had hardly enough money to satiate the local demand for credit. In 1975, when the guerrilla was talking to villagers about revolution, nearly 70% of the villagers would still make the annual trip to the south coast, facing the same conditions that had tormented generations of Mayans. Another factor was the almost unequivocal support from the Catholic Church. For many, especially the new AC Catholics, the guerrilla movement was in line with their spiritual beliefs, especially the criticism of the rich and the idea that the "last will be first." Although at first the Church took no position on the revolution, its emphasis on development seemed in accordance with its fundamental ethical principals. Several recall that Padre Roberto, the successor to Padre Tol, was a liberation theologist and spoke openly about social justice from the

pulpit. Some claim that Roberto privately advocated the guerrilla movement within a small group of educated indigenous *cateqistas* and leaders. Finally and very importantly, for many, revolutionary ideologies blended into the conceptions among goals of local leaders developed through struggles with Ladinos. Mayan struggles against racism were seen as coterminous with this movement, even if official discourses and daily practices of the guerrilla did not emphasize ending racial discrimination as a specified goal of the revolution.

Although it is impossible to gauge precisely the level of involvement of particular individuals, especially since many of them are now dead or had fled when military repression took over the town, most indigenous leaders, and most villagers, were either sympathetic to the guerrilla movement, if not directly involved. Local guerrilla leaders estimate that well over half community members were organized, and that more were sympathizers. While clandestine, most everyone in the village knew they were there and had a general idea, if not entirely accurate, of who of their neighbors were and were not supporting them. Sometimes they held open meetings with villagers in the school buildings. Numerous villages had become *territorios libres* (free territories) by 1980. One local leader from ORPA recalled that, "*we had people* donde quiera," (everywhere). By late 1977, many Sampedranos had joined the new peasant organization *Comite de Unidad Campesino*, or CUC, which had a loose, underground affiliation with the guerrilla, but enough autonomy to give them the plausible deniability necessary to operate with some moral force publicly. CUC pushed for many of the same goals embraced by the cooperatives, and made broader criticisms of conditions in the plantations and military power (Grandin 1997, 13).[16]

Although the revolutionary movement was highly resonant with existing struggles for social and racial justice, it introduced way of thinking and feeling that did not

previously exist. This was a far cry now from traditional beliefs about power and political agency. The antagonism between Mayans and the dominant Guatemalan social order has deep roots, but was formerly conceptualized in different terms, some of which are condensed in Mayan folklore about the lord of the mountain, or *witz* in Mam. The *witz is* a rich, evil, white (probably Spanish) man who magically appears to poor Mayans, offering them wishes, but only in return for their soul. The *witz* stories have a similar plot. A Mayan (most commonly male) encounters a strange man while on a walk alone. The man invites him to his home, and, when he agrees, the two are immediately transported to a beautiful home on top of the mountain. Having revealed his identity in this way, the *witz* then offers the man wishes or incredible wealth. The man accepts the gift, but eventually regrets it. Because the wish is cursed, the man dies and the fortune turns to ashes. In these stories, the *witz* owns the mountain, symbolizing a plantation owner; but he is also the devil. Others have pointed out how this and similar popular tales allegorize the relationship between the rich Ladino landowners and poor Mayans, and serve to warn against the evils of engagement in individual profit seeking, which violated traditional community-oriented moral economy, where status was derived from the destruction of wealth in the *cofradías* (religious brotherhood) (Watanabe 1992, cfa Taussig 1981). The *witz's* motivation is the pure otherworldly evil of the devil: he wants to consume a soul—a poignant transfiguration of the life poured out in the years of forced labor in the coffee and banana fields of the landowners. This does not mean to say that rural Mayans used to believe that Ladino landowners were the devil and possessed supernatural powers; but it does strongly indicate a shared sense of inevitability regarding the prevailing social order.

The revolutionary narrative offered a new hermeneutic for understanding Guatemalan society, complete with a new set of metaphors, details and scenarios. In the

1970s, clandestine meeting with guerrillas introduced Mayans to many intricate details about the profit system. Like the *witz* story, the revolutionary discourse proclaims current social relations unjust, but does so by defining the current mode of production as exploitative profiteering, done by humans for human motives. Mayans came to see the land tenure system as a theft of what rightfully belonged to "*los pobres*." Planters were now seen as *"los ricos"* who profited from the exploitation of Mayan workers, whose labor they "stole" by paying low wages. It was also seen as a form of discrimination against Mayans, who were "enslaved" by rich Ladinos. This version is secular, preempting the search for an appeal to the supernatural—which it labeled as pre-modern and superstitious—by emphasizing the human motives that animate capitalist relations of production. It accuses those at the top of the system of criminally excessive accumulation borne of greed.

There was another important difference: Unlike the *witz*, who is non-human and magical, the *finquero* (plantation owner) was human. Once human, a *finquero* could die—something unthinkable about a *witz*, but a foundational assumption of the revolution. The revolutionary narrative demystified the social structure, presenting it as man-made and reversible. It described society as a diametrical antagonism between two forces destined to collide, or maybe that were always already locked in combat. The first direction nullifies, the other liberates. It is not like the *witz* story, where the money taken is cursed: the guerrilla communicated a faith in the power of the peasantry to overthrow the elite and to create a new society. It sets up the people as inevitably challenging this power structure, and inevitably succeeding. Mayan understandings of the revolutionary narrative were refracted through local conceptions of morality and social justice, which were also evolving in relationship to religious and economic transformations. This narrative mapped itself onto these terms, embellishing them at points and transforming

them while never replacing them entirely. The result was more 'Mayan' than it was 'revolutionary'. Mayans identified with the revolutionary goals, taking land from the rich and giving it to the poor; but for most of them, the 'rich' meant Ladinos and the 'poor' meant indigenous, them. Struggles for race and class justice were inextricable. Mayan conceptions of anti-racism also included their contests with local Ladinos. This generated an excitement about the possibility of political utopia within their reach.

Paralleling this growing organization at the clandestine level was the local Mayan-Ladino politics for control of the town. In 1976, the DC fielded time with Arturo Ramírez as the candidate. Again, municipal land remained a central issue. This time, however, Ramírez faced more sophisticated electoral tactics from the MLN. Aware that many communities had began to solicit potable water projects since 1970s, the MLN candidate began to promise these projects would be delivered, provided that they vote for the MLN. Many Sampedrano indigenous, even close family members of Arturo Ramírez, traded their support for this promise. Mayan villagers insist that Arturo won the election, only to be denied entry, in another example of anti-democratic intransigence by Ladino elites. After this imposed victory, the new *alcalde*, Villatoro, never made good on his promise: communities would still have to wait several more years for their water. Instead he declared the title invalid, and the communities lost the claims to water sources they had already bought. They still rent the water they once owned, and worry about their children's futures. Obstacles to placing even victorious indigenous *alcaldes* in previous elections did nothing to stop local political organizing. Actually, it seems to only have intensified. In the electoral campaign of 1978, Jacinto Garcia was the candidate—this time for the FUR, the *Frente Union Revolucionario*—an openly revolutionary party. Alongside the party's revolutionary image, once again the issue of municipal land continued to be at the forefront of the elections. And it appeared that

Jacinto would win this election. Whatever these hopes were, they disintegrated with the assassination of Miguel Colom Argueta, the party's vice presidential candidate, one week before the elections, causing the entire national party to collapse. The Ladino candidate won easily. Nationally, Lucas Garcia assumed control of the presidency, and the violence against guerrillas and suspected peasants escalated.

Although sympathy for or participation in the guerrilla was widespread, there were also strong currents of opposition. Not all community members were interested in the guerrilla movement, and some were steadfastly opposed. Many evangelicals, but definitely not all, refused to help the guerrilla. One reason was an interpretation of a Biblical verse in Romans, common among evangelicals, which held that the law of the land is established by God himself, and therefore should not be opposed. Many, especially military commissioners and *contratistas* (labor contractors) sought their own best interests through alignment with Ladinos, plantation owners and the army. Many spied on community members, reported their activities, or suspicions of their activities, directly to the military. Guerrilla organizers and villagers recall divisions over the guerrilla movement stemming from class position. Indigenous who had some land, and were comfortable were much less interested in participating, thinking either that they would risk losing their own lands to the revolutionary goal of land redistribution, or simply not feeling like they had anything to gain, and much to lose. Another reason why some Mayans did not support the guerrilla was based in their alliance to the planter class party MLN, and the populism of Lucas Garcia, who claimed to support the poor against the rich by raising the minimum wage from 50 *centavos* to three *quetzales*. But without a doubt the most important reason why many Mayans, regardless of religion, did not join or support the guerrilla cause was their opposition to the use of violence as a means of social change. Some feared the consequences, while others just thought it was wrong.

Worries about potential risks went alongside many of the other justifications given for not participating, and almost certainly influenced them. It was an opinion shared by the previous generation of indigenous leaders who remembered the defeat of the Arbenz government and the violent dismantling of the *Comités Agrarios*. One Day of the Dead, I was told by one of my friends in San Pedro that his uncle was coming for a visit and that I should talk to him about local political history. His uncle Anastasio turned out to be the former leader of ORPA in the San Pedro who fled to southern Mexico during the violence. During a long conversation about his life in Mexico, his reaction to town politics, and differences between people now and people before, Anastasio recalled the conversation that transpired when he went to ask the advice of Francisco Lazaro and the ex-*alcalde*, Pedro Morales about whether or not they should join the guerrilla:

> Anastasio: We want to get ahead in a legal way. But it is illegal for those governing now. What can we do? We want to arm ourselves.
>
> Pedro: "You won't be able to. We already passed a stage of that. We did it. But we didn't win. We wanted it, but we proved it's impossible. What they're going to do is kidnap some of you. That's 100% certain. Here in San Pedro Necta you still don't know. You're ignorant. You want to fly, but it's going to be difficult, you're going to be kidnapped. There's going to be war."

"*But*" Anastasio recalled, *"we were already way ahead in the process."* This conversation suggests a diffuse, and loosely organized local political scene, and in particular a gap in communication between key political actors from two generations, a far cry from the image of a collective Mayan consciousness that seems to underlie much analysis of town and departmental politics. Once in the communities, many villagers, participants and non-participants, disliked the authoritarian and violent tactics of the guerrilla within the community. Although the guerrilla left many people alone who did not want to get involved, some were threatened and beaten up. There were even threats

among people who had already agreed to help, based on rumors that they had begun to help the army.

Complicating matters further, unresolved internal divisions within the guerrilla groups also raised doubts among community leaders about their comPeténce. Speaking with an irritated tone, as if the events he was speaking about had just happened last month, Anastasio recalls the split between ORPA and the EGP. ORPA, the more military professional oriented group, was increasingly dissatisfied with the operations being carried out by the EGP:

> The EGP didn't want ORPA in their zone. But we [members ORPA] realized that the EGP wasn't working well. If there was a combat, it was sure that three or four people would die. They didn't know how to take a town. They always had contradictions in their work, because they accelerated things a lot. Every time. They didn't explore the place before making war. The entry they knew well, but they fell apart on the exit. We [ORPA] have to go in and see the place—even if it takes five days. Where are you going to go in? How are you going to get out? Where are you going to place the mine?

The EGP's criticisms of the ORPA was, not surprisingly, their single-minded focus on combat and their relative disinterest in building long-term bases through consciousness raising and organization. Some complain that ORPA arrives, grabs a person that they want to train, and leaves the community behind. Although the EGP and ORPA had initially agreed to divide the town into distinct zones—the ORPA working in the *finca* villages and the EGP handling the rest—the reality is that these groups competed for the same communities. In the midst of such competition, community leaders were sometimes unsure of how to respond. One prominent village leaders, who later entered town politics remembered their frustration that, "*There was competition between them [the guerrilla] also, and for that reason it gave us doubts about deciding which group to go with. If they were fighting with each other, we did not feel secure with them."* The result was often less enthusiastic participation, hedging of bets. *"We helped, but kept our*

distance." To be sure, the distance between guerrilla involvement and non-involvement was filled with levels of internal gradation and critical reflection.

There were also important divisions within the guerrilla organization. Local guerrilla organizers within the ranks of the guerrillas were dissatisfied with the actions of a command structure that they saw as out of touch with local reality. First, they saw the conflict between guerrilla forces as an unproductive conflict whose origins were at the top. As Anastasio put it, *"If the four guerrilla commanders (EGP, ORPA, FAR, PGT) were allied, the [guerrilla] would have won. The commanders never thought 'how are we going to do this? … because they're dying'"* Beyond this incomprehensible matter of counterproductive strategy, doubts about the use and distribution of resources were another source of tension between the local base and the high command. Problems with distribution followed ethnic lines, and raised doubts regarding the extent to which the guerrilla actually represented the interests of the indigenous bases. Anastasio described this clearly, and it is worth quoting him at length:

> On the other hand, it could be that those maximum leaders—they're Ladinos also—[think] 'if one part of them die it doesn't matter. It could be that they were *poniendo el clavo* (driving in the nail). Because we found out at the last hour that a commander was sending money a the *subteniente* (lieutenant), and the *subteniente* says that he would get the shoes and uniforms that he would have to have the boots for 15 days before he would give them over to a militant. How is that possible? For that, selfishness exists. But we are studying truth and equality, but here we are seeing that inequality. How is it that a *subteniente* is going to wear shoes some 20 or 15 days before he gives them over? It's contaminated at the top then. There are problems. That's why the war failed here. If not, it would be different. There is never going to be a clean thing. Never but never. Every mind is a world. We can't do it alone. There is always going to be someone who wants to be bigger than the other person. And the money too…when they would send money the *comandantes* themselves would grab the money. According to what they said, there was no money. I talked to a Swiss man, he was with us. "Look *comandante*. What are you going to do with the money that comes in? "The money is being invested in weapons and uniforms." For me this wasn't real. Because here we are cooperating. Here we are putting in our grain of sand daily. Because from me comes the first part. A person 100% given over, giving beans,

> corn, courses to the sympathizers who come to me. How is it possible that there is no money? If there is money, why don't they give me a kilo of sugar? If there is money there, then there should be some here also. That's just the way the war was made. It [the money] stayed with them. They said there was no money.

These doubts regarding the importance of the primarily indigenous base to Ladino commanders were clearly shared by many leaders who were not as involved, leading many not to participate, or to not participate as fully as they otherwise might have. More than insulting, such hierarchies are seen as hypocrisies of the revolutionary commitment to equality.

The presence of clandestine armed groups in the villages had other negative consequences. In some cases, villagers denounced their personal enemies—people with whom they had a land dispute or a personal grievance—to the army, claiming that they were working for the guerrilla. In one village, a man was killed days after publicly opposing the guerrilla. Family members blamed their neighbors, claiming it was because he was opposed and that it was feared he would begin to name names. Others suggest that it could have been because he was a *contratista* for *finqueros* on the coast, and that different people who had taken out loans in advance of working contracts killed him so as to not have to pay back their loans, using his opposition to the guerrilla as a disguise. Undoubtedly, this and other cases of guerrilla violence against villagers led to resentments and community divisions. There are also various reports of several groups claiming to be guerrillas carrying out robberies against villagers. Events like these were a source of constant uncertainty that defined the war. The war was a context that could be adapted in many different ways by different people, for multitudes of ends.

Guerrilla organizing and activity steadily increased in Huehuetenango from 1979-1981, and events in San Pedro were part of a larger department wide campaign (Kobrack 2003). In one operation, guerrilla operatives knocked down light posts in various villages.

The *finquero*—Gilberto Herrera—the local leader of the MLN party—was executed in hishome in 1979 in Ixnul. Once, guerrillas had a firefight with the local police that left one guerrilla dead. Most dramatic of the guerrillas' public actions, and the most poorly received by the populace, was the burning of the building in 1981. Guerrilla fighters bombed bridges over the Rio Selegua in Colotenango and San Sebastian. They ambushed army convoys moving along the Inter-American highway. Army patrols were attacked regularly. Guerrillas kidnapped public officials, and for ransom ran their propaganda in the press. Sampedranos were aware of all these activities through radio, newspapers and rumor. Amidst this maelstrom of violence, planters who previously lived in San Pedro moved to the capital for get out of the line of fire. After the violence the temptation to read history backward is almost overwhelming; yet during the first two years the guerrilla was in the communities, it seemed like revolution was on the horizon. And it could have happened.

Although revolutionary discourses and practices did not recognize Mayans as possessing distinct needs and desires as an ethnic group, the presence of the guerrilla movement in the *municipio* and in the countryside in general altered the perceived balance of power between Ladinos and indigenous in the *municipio*. Planters feared for their lives. One son of a *finquero* even joined the guerrilla movement in hopes of avoiding reprisals against his father. The new guerrilla revolutionary ideology and the presence of an armed force emboldened local activism. All of the local conflicts over discrimination and power intensified with the arrival of the guerrilla. One local guerrilla leader, engaging in activities completely unrelated to guerrilla objectives, went to uproot coffee planted in the newly privatized communal lands in El Llano. Guerrilla activism produced a synergy with pre-existing indigenous struggles. These new sensations of political agency, and new conceptions of the types of political changes that were

desirable and possible underwent a sudden, and terrifying reconfiguration with the arrival of the army.

YEARS OF TERROR

Early in 1982 army attacks on villagers increased dramatically. Between March and April, the army killed 7 in the *aldea* el Cable (CEH 1998, 5322). On the 2nd of August in the *aldea* Ixnul, members of the army raped and executed 6 women, torturing two of them first, along with three other men from the village. A newborn infant, the son of one of the women died shortly after of hunger (CEH caso 5052). On October 28, the army killed eleven people in the *aldea* Canoguitas. Two were tortured and two were burned alive in their houses (CEH 1999, caso 5527). This changed villagers' relationship to the guerrilla movement, which was soon seen as a lost cause, and a dangerous one at that. It gave a new force to the patrols as well, which now turned completely against guerrilla involvement in almost all villages.

The first head of the patrols in San Pedro was Marco Tulio, who was replaced in the late 1980s by Victor Hugo Laparra. The military imposed an *alcalde* in 1982, suspending elections. The patrols began ideological training in the communities, denouncing the guerrilla, human rights, and democracy. In some villages, the patrols took root quickly, and took a hard line against suspected guerrilla supporters. In the village of Niya, the army, with the help of civil patrollers from the *aldea*, captured and tortured Olimpia Carillo and Yolanda Carillo for six days (CEH caso 5134). Abuses of power were built into the civil patrol system, the entire structure of was a human rights violation, one which demanded community members to participate in mutual punishment. However, community members in some villages participated with *doble cara*,

participating in both the guerrilla and the patrols. Some even volunteered to be the patrol leaders.

There are different theories about why the army came to San Pedro when it did, and why it selected the targets that it did. Most Ladinos and some indigenous believe most of those killed were known guerrillas. Another theory, voiced mainly by indigenous, is that more radical agitation over discrimination and municipal power led certain Ladinos to denounce the indigenous leaders to the army for personal interests, with no proof of their involvement. The pattern of violence that ensued provides evidence for the latter scenario. Among those killed were the Garcia brothers—Jacinto and Alfonso. They were tortured all night long and killed the next day. Ten days afterwards the army disappeared Francisco Domingo from Tepan, another leader of the Alcoholics Anonymous chapter (first brought to Guatemala in San Pedro by Padre Richard in 1958) suspected of being a front for guerrilla operations. In 1982, Arturo Ramírez was kidnapped while on a bus in Huehuetenango and never seen again. Family members of the deceased fled, fearing for their lives. Once gone, these people were presumed to be guerrillas and their houses were burned. The military soon set up a permanent base in town, where hundreds of suspected villagers were tortured and killed, their tortured screams piercing the night air. The army imposed a *toca de queda* a curfew from 6pm to 6am. Those found out afterwards were beaten and thrown in jail by the patrollers, and often suspected of guerrilla involvement. Community members with cars were ordered by the army to take turns driving *costal* bags filled with their corpses down to the Selegua River. Sometimes their land or houses were stolen. Rumors circulated that entire villages were going to be wiped off the map, a threat that by this time had been made reality in several townships in Huehuetenango. Bodies of suspected guerrilla

leaders, such as Natividad Ruíz Ramírez, were hung under the bridge in Chemiche, so that everyone could learn the fate of subversives.

The decision to abandon the guerrilla did not mean that villagers began to enthusiastically support the military, although some certainly did collaborate enthusiastically. Most hated and were disgusted by the abusive behavior of soldiers, extreme violence and disregard for the sanctity of human life. Soldiers would steal food and money, rape women, and torture people, and mutilate bodies of the deceased. The army's refusal to distinguish between civilian and military targets was seen as especially cowardly. Villagers disliked the intense supervision imposed by the patrols, loathed the long cold hours spent patrolling, afraid and cold, and the punishments for abandoning duties—a cold bath in the *pila* (large cement sink) after which one had to patrol wet, or days in village *jaulas* (makeshift cage). Villagers lived in fear that their names might be on the military's list, or that their village would be burned. The majority of steadfastly anti-guerrilla community members refused to collaborate with the military's attempts to find names of guerrilla participants and sympathizers. Despite their dislike of military control and violence, over time, many community members came to appreciate the unity that the patrols brought to the village, even if it did so in a mandatory fashion. *"If there was a meeting, everyone would come, immediately. We were united in those days, working for the community."* Because the military imposed patrol leaders, there was also clear leadership, and little room for discussion. The curfew made crime, such as property theft between community members, almost impossible.

POST VIOLENCE MAYAN POLITICS

Fighting continued between the guerrilla and the army, and between the guerrillas and Civil Patorllers, especially in neighboring Colotenango—a guerrilla stronghold,

deeply divided between patrollers and guerrillas. But for the most part, the military power of the insurgency had been destroyed. In 1985, the army decided to move towards democratization. They ratified a new constitution and agreed to have open civilian elections. After the violence in the early 1980s, a group of indigenous leaders from Guachipilín, a *aldea* near the town center, formed a new organization. Their goals were development projects and an indigenous *alcalde*. Members of this organization included some who had symphathized with guerrilla activities and some who did not. José Antulio, Morales remembered in one interview that the organization was informed by the previous geurrilla sympathies of many group members. *"[Before] we were in favor of the guerrilla, and we had learned a lot from that experience about discrimination."* This matches the description given by another leader in the group. *"The idea to have a campaign for mayor came from the guerrilla—to end the discrimination."*

Discrimination was easy to spot. Villages had long since formed development committes in hopes of getting potable water, schools and roads for their villages since the ealry 1970s, but had had little success in gaining funding from the Ladino *alcaldes*, who in any case had little funding for such projects. In 1985, the government instituted the 8% municipal tax, the funds for which were to be used to finance public works projects. As I discuss in more detail in chapter 9, the new indigenous political organizations eyed these funds as a way to raise the standard of living in their villages. Still, community leaders did not know how to run a campaign, and had little resources. The solution came when representatives of the conservative party *Partizo de Avanzo Nacional* PAN approached the organization in 1989, offering to finance a mayoral campaign, and promising projects for the indigenous communities in San Pedro. There was one huge condition, however, as one of the members of this group recounted:

> When we entered into the party PAN they gave us opportunties for projects, the only thing was that they told us that we couldn't participate in or help social movements, like the URNG or CUC. They made this very clear to us. If we were going to help groups like the URNG, there would be no projects. We were taking advantage of them, but they were also taking advantage of us.

Convinced of the ineffectiveness of popular movements, and eager to get a space in power and to begin development—which since the institution of the 8% tax had all gone to Ladinos in the *pueblo*—the group agreed to the conditions.

Pedro Ramírez volunteered to be the first indigenous candidate. Pedro had helped the community by finding funds for a road project, establishing his credentials as a community leader. Initially, there was a great deal of support from the communities for his campaign. Almost immediately after they began, however, Ladinos from the pueblo, with the help of an indigenous military commissioner, began a smear campaign, calling Pedro and his group guerrillas who were going to bring back the violence. What looked like a possible victory turned into a humiliating defeat to the Marco Tulio, the first head of the civil patrollers, representing the center-right *Partído de Solidaridad Nacional*, PSN. By this time, there were a number of infrastructure projects arriving to the rural towns. Indigenous leaders still felt strongly that there was a poor distribution of development funds between town Ladinos and rural villages, the very place where they saw the most necessity.

Frustrated, but determined to win, the group continued in the next round, this time their candidate was Natanael, a teacher from Canoguitas who lived most of the time in Huehuetenango, still the only indigenous candidate, for a different party. This time the conditions were different. With so many funds coming in to the municiality every few months, allegations of corruption began to emerge against Marco Tulio. There was never any hard proof, but dissatisfaction with Marco, who naturally denies the charges, grew. The war had also cooled down. Preliminary peace agreements were being negotiated

between guerrilla and army factions. There was a cease fire. Refugees had begun to return from Mexico. There was little material available to fuel a credible scare campaign against Natanael. In a shock to town Ladinos, Natanael won by a landslide. Finally, the group, with the help of a broad base of indigenous leaders in a variety of communities, had gotten their wish. With José Antulio as the first councilor on an all indigeonus team, Natanael began to work. As promised during the elections, numerous projects arrived in the communities that had pledged their support to the campaign. The communities were evidently pleased. After a two year term, Natanael was re-elected, this time with the center right *Unión Democratica*. The political climate continued to thaw, with Peace Agreements on the horizon.

After the second victory, a division emerged between José Antulio Morales and Natanael when Natanael announced his intention to seek a third term. According to Morales, this violated the agreement of the group to only serve two terms each. Natanael argued that the first term was only for two years, and that the alcaldia term had only been extended to four years for his second period. Nonetheless, Morales, who spent more time in the municipal building than Natanael, who worked and lived in Huehuetenango, divided off. Apparently, the community leaders in the group, which had grown substantially, were in agreement. Morales defeated Natanael in the next elections.

Morales had the advantage of being alcalde at a when international development funds earmarked for postwar reconstruction were pouring into Guatemala. The government had established *Fondo de Inversion Social* (FIS), *Fondo de Desarrollo Indígena de Guatemala* (FODIGUA), the *Secretario General de Planificacion Nacional* (SEGEPLAN)—among other national groups involved directly in infrastructural development. Internationally administred funds came in from Community Developmnet for Peace (DECOPAZ), and the National Peace Fund (FONAPAZ) and dozens of other

groups. These programs supplemented the funds the alcalde had at his disposal from the municipal tax, which by this time had risen to 10%. Morales was a skilled reader of the Guatemalan political landscape, and an astute politician. He was also known as a gifted and inspiring orator, a much-admired ability among Sampedranos—Ladinos and Mayans alike. The next elections, in 1998, were also won by José Morales, against more than six indigenous candidates, from more than 10 parties. This time Ladinos had joined his team. By the time Morales' second term ended, he had left an indelible mark on the town: in eight years, over 70 projects, including numerous large ones, had arrived to San Pedro, at least one in each *aldea*, and several in the municipal center, including a new municipal building which is only now being completed. By anyone's estimation these accomplishments represented a dramatic change in the distribution of municipal resources and the balance of power between indigenous and Ladinos, and between the rural and the urban sectors of the town. But certain factors began to sour the victory. Accusations of corruption were mounting, and would soon become a fixture of rural political life.

In the 2003 campaign for Mayor, Morales, keeping with his agreement to only serve for two terms, left the mayoral race and entered into the CASA, an indigenous party headed up by the then alcalde of Quetzaltenango, Rigoberto Queme Chay. Morales wanted to be a *diputado*, and CASA gave him the space. When Queme left over internal divisions, this party collapsed, and Morales, and his followers—he had helped pick his own replacement mayoral candidate—joined the *Alianza Nueva Nacion* which Morales described as the "sister party" to CASA, and the natural choice for a replacement. They also offered Morales a spot as a *diputado*. In addition to his desire to seek a *diputación*, there was an ideological motive behind his decision to leave the PAN. He liked the CASA party because they were fielding an indigenous candidate; Queme would be the

first in the country's history. Morales had another progressive streak. He emphasized the importance of women's participation in local politics, an exclusive and hostile male terrain, in his public speeches and also in his political team—working well with a powerful female politician. Petrona Lazaro became the first woman, and the first indigenous woman, to work as a *consejal* (councilor).

Things went badly for Morales' organization. The PAN party, represented by Alejando Ortiz, an indigenous teacher from San Pedro who lived in Hueuhetenango, seemed to have the most followers going into the final weeks of the election. The FRG's candiate, Mariano Díaz, who had been defeated by Morales in the last election, was coming on strong. Lifted at the last minute by by the FRG's politicization of the pay for the ex-PAC. Díaz won by a huge margin, almost doubling the number of votes cast for PAN. ANN, disorganized still after regrouping from the fallen CASA party, came in fourth after the URNG, who surprised many by such a strong showing. Antulio Morales also lost his bid for *diputado*, a failure he blamed on the ANN's failure to invest enought in the departmental campaign. He was looking for another party, possibly the newly formed UNE, when he died in a car accident while driving home alone on the Interamerican highway in October of 2004.

REFLECTIONS

The forms of organization and spirituality characteristic of Mayan communities for nearly a century are all but unknown today among Mayans in San Pedro, who have opted or been forced through decades of political and social transformation and upheaval, to pursue alternatives. Despite the fact that they go unrecognized, it is possible to see elements of these forms still very much at play. These are not 'survivals' but adaptive re-articulations adopted under particular circumstances of something that never had a single

essence. Most striking in this history is how, after every defeat, Sampedranos recover, regroup, and find new ways to improve their life conditions. Also impressive is how, despite a diversity of opinions, perspectives and positionings, community members struggle to remain united. Mayan responses to changing historical situations reveal a political consciousness that is heterogeneous, sophisticated and evolving. This history provides much evidence that problematize contemporary categorizations of Mayan politics as inherently *either* left, right or solely community focused (cfa Hale 2006).[17]

Contrary to interpretations that sees Mayans as 'anti-guerrilla', or caught between two armies (Stoll 1993, LeBot 1992), or a 'Mayanista' frame that downplays Mayan support and concern for revolutionary politics (Cotji 1997), many Sampedranos Mayans participated enthusiastically in the revolution because they saw the struggle of the poor against the rich as continuous with their local struggles against discrimination.[18] Mayan political actions and alliances exhibited strong distrust of Ladinos as well as of the state and multinational capital. These political actions suggest a strong, shared knowledge that they have been discriminated against because of who they are. Rather than thinking of these as contradictory poles, their actions suggest that during the period of 1976-1982 they saw these forces as fundamentally, inextricably linked together. Left-organized Sampedranos understood that being Mayan had everything to do with why they were poor, and why they were treated like slaves for generations. It is also likely that national level politics had been a concern since the democratic Revolution. Some of the oral history data discussed in this chapter suggest that instead of a 'lack of national vision' among the new generation most directly affiliated with the guerrilla, there was a lack of knowledge about the local history of participation in national politics.[19] However, many Mayans, and almost certainly community leaders, already knew about national politics, and had very strong opinions about it, forged through decades of work on the plantations,

oral history of participation in peasant organizing during the democratic Revolution, and the influence of the cooperatives. Prior participation in these other movements, as well as their prior experience in struggles against Ladino domination locally, shaped their receptivity to the revolutionary ideas. Nonetheless, the guerrilla movement was a strong reminder of the need to consider the national. Before their arrival, the actions of many Mayan leaders indicate that they viewed 'national politics' not just as a field in and to itself, but as a realm of activities and events that could open spaces to contest local ethnic hierarchies. Long before the arrival of the guerrilla, Mayans sought affiliations with national parties, like the DC and the PR to give them leverage in local struggles with Ladinos for resources, power and respect. It appears that the most significant effect of the guerrilla presence on Mayans who participated was on their shared sense of the possible efficacy of national level political change.

Sampedranos who opposed the guerrilla movement took issue mainly with strategy, particularly the morality and efficacy of the use of violence, and not their diagnosis of local or national problems or their general vision of social justice. Sampedranos did not criticize the revolution because they wanted instead to create a Mayan-only state, for example. They affirmed a society where Ladinos and Mayans were not only treated as equals, but had the same life opportunities. In addition to voicing concerns over strategy, and the risks it presented, local guerrilla sympathizers and participants criticized the ethics of the racial hierarchies that were part of the daily reality of guerrilla organizing. Participants were deeply offended and frustrated with these problems, but their belief in the struggle itself, and possibly a good deal of thick skin built up over years of dealing with Ladinos, led them to continue in spite of ethnic double standards. Many Mayans were sympathetic with and willing to participate in the revolution despite their dissatisfaction with the general operation of the program. For

many Sampedranos, criticisms of state power appeared to outstrip anger at the practices of subordination exclusion within the guerrilla movement. Not enough attention can be paid to the fact that the main preferential treatment for Ladino commanders of the revolution, the one that would prove to be enormous difference later, was their distance from the violence on the ground.

With this rich history of attentiveness to national politics, it is hard to agree with characterizations of Mayans as "localistic." But Sampedranos seem to be, at least in one important sense, 'localistic': they are deeply concerned with community well-being and with local struggles for dignity and equality with town Ladinos. Their patterns of political engagement indicate a strong sense of belonging and acting together as a group for collective ends. Even when disagreements occur—such as was the case with the guerrilla movement—it is usually a question of how best to pursue the security and well-being of the group. There are a few instances during the war when certain people became seen as a danger to community well-being, and those were the times, with some exceptions, that villagers killed other villagers: military commissioners, and people who refused to participate in the civil patrols. Beyond this, community members went to great lengths to stop the army from hurting anyone in the villages. Most people who were opposed to the guerrilla regularly lied to authorities to prevent the army from coming after their neighbors. Even when villagers killed other villagers, it was rare that the villagers turned to the army to settle the dispute, although there were certainly cases.

Hale (2006) suggests that racist Ladino refusals to permit indigenous ascendance into municipal politics, in an attempt to maintain a "separate but equal" world, probably forced movements with "relatively moderate political sensibilities" to radicalize (61).[20] This is evident in San Pedro, where events suggest additional tendencies. First, it appears the lack of opportunities for national politics seems to have intensified the focus

on town politics. This was certainly true in the late1960s, even when the stakes of local politics were comparatively low because of the reduced power of the *alcalde* due to the lack of municipal funds. Never has the focus on town politics been so strong as it is now. Second, the presence of the guerrilla emboldened Mayans to take on more active pursuit of their own objectives, town land, indigenous *alcalde*, which only came on with more fury once collective organization was underway. This feeling of empowerment spilled over into local struggles almost immediately, leading to ever more strident confrontations with town power as well as the authority of the *contratistas*, some of who were killed. If a renewed appreciation for the dilemma of national politics and the enhanced sense of being able to actually do something about it were the main advantages of the presence of the guerrilla movement, the main disadvantages seemed to be more pressing. The most obvious effect was the violence itself. Although Mayan who participated knew the risks, few could have predicted the brutal extent of the army response. And not only did the movement split Mayans, who were, whatever their political sensibilities, in the impossible situation of having to either be 'for' or 'against' the revolution, and, therefore, 'for' or 'against' the army. Both the guerrilla and army were guilty, in different degrees and with different consequences, of this type of thinking that soon made any middle ground disappear. Because of impossibility of neutrality that both sides demanded, it led to serious internal divisions in among Mayans, sometimes seen, or at least treated, by their neighbors as either with one or the other. Mayan political organizations in San Pedro Necta were able to overcome, for the most part, factional divisions caused by the war. But this unity was fleeting. Divisions emerged again in the field of electoral politics in the early 1990s.

NOTES

[1] This pattern was so strong that substantial dialectical differences in the same Mayan languages appear in neighboring towns. Each one has their distinctive variations for even some the most common of words. For a discussion of the effects of Liberal reforms on Mayan communities, see McCreery (1976, 1984), Cambranes (1985) and many others.

[2] Village men would take turns performing community cargos. Contemporary variations in the cargo system will be discussed in the next chapters. Also, one of the important effects of the cofradia, often commented upon, was to regulate wealth differentiation between community members. Cofradia members, also elected on a rotating basis, were obliged to throw lavish and expensive parties, inviting the entire community.

[3] This chapter is limited by the fact that the municipal building, including all of its records, burned in 1981 during the war.

[4] Although Forster provides great detail on this little known history, she is herself puzzled as to why the department of San Marcos experienced such high levels of organizing and neighboring departments did not. She notes that:

"The Indigenous poor of Huehuetenango did not seize the initiative in the same manner as the Indigenous of San Marcos [in the time before the Democratic Revolution]. However, the labor records of the revolutionary government indicate that *campesinos* in Huehuetenango took the agrarian policies of the 1940s extremely seriously, and unleashed similar organizing demands on plantations distant from their home communities. Perhaps one could conclude that a large plantation economy—with Indigenous workers in this case—provided a critical foundation for widespread revolutionary participation in the countryside."

[5] Foster's study also shows that, in labor unions in rural San Marcos:

> class conflict was described in language of race relations, everywhere but in the Mam-highlands, where "the rich" were also indigenous. In the plantation zone, the presence of Ladinos as a minority among the campesino population did not alter the ideological equation of Indigenous campesinos versus non-indigenous elites.

[6] Handy concludes that this did not, and was never intended to, decrease community autonomy, however. He argues instead that "in most instances" these were more likely efforts to "reallocate a scarce resource more equitably" among poor townspeople.

[7] Handy makes the following argument: "In the early stages of the revolution, either local Ladinos or slates of Indian candidates that fulfilled traditional requirements and rules with the aid of the principales were elected. However, as the strength of peasant and worker organizations grew and the importance of the political affiliations became more apparent, slates for election to office were presented composed of people who had not held important position in community structures and could not be approved by the principales. In these villages, elections occasionally became contests between the traditional structures of the community and mostly young usurpers who viewed their

national affiliations and their organization into political parties and peasant leagues as more important requirements."

[8] This possibility was brought to my attention by Father Kevin Lynch. Father Kevin viewed this displacement as inevitable and ultimately for the best.

[9] Grandin (2004) qualifies the PR along with the Democracia Cristiana as "the most important reform party allowed to operate after 1954" and "the MLN's [the *Movimiento Liberacion Nacional*] chief rival in the countryside" (88).

[10] Manz, Beatriz. 2004. Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 39

[11] In her recent book, based on over twenty years of experience with the town of Santa Cruz del Quiche, Beatriz Manz describes the mix of ideas circulating in the cooperatives: "The discussion of cooperatives ranged from an analysis of broad social issues or political conditions to local accounting practices. Discussions covered the causes of poverty, the policies of the government, the unequal distribution of land, exploitation, lack of organization, or lack of employment." (2004, 55)

[12] Gaitan's report on FENACOAC in 1972 contends that small producers are coming to understand the value of savings, and also "demonstrating that the habit of savings is a systematic practice that can be combined with traditional and ancestral customs of our population, with a combination for the improvement of the community." (57)

[13] The goal of training cooperative leaders was that:

"the campesino or the cooperativist worker will turn into a new man. Discover their own *capacidades* (capacity, capabilities) and work to liberate himself from traditionalism, demonstrating that he is capable of responsibly assuming the challenge that we all confront underdevelopment, ignorance, and misery." (Gaitan 1972, 58)

[14] This was brought to light by a personal communication with Virginia Garrard-Burnett, who also suggested that he might have had a role in a horrible massacre that took place during the time he was in charge of the defense ministry.

[15] These authors suggest that a growing economic insecurity was integral to the decision of Mayans to join the guerrilla movement. Stoll (1999) provides an alternative accounting, arguing that Mayans were economically and politically ascendant before the guerrilla's arrival, and the political goals of local organizations were hijacked by revolutionary organizing, and set back decades. Making the baffling decision to ignore more systematic analysis of the rural economic situation, Stoll uses anecdotal data, notably his favorite target, Rigoberta Menchu's passing reference to the fact that her father was a merchant.

[16] Grandin describes CUC's activitites as including the following:

> access to credit, land titles, fair prices for both goods that campesinos bought such as fertilizer and agricultural products that they sold, adequate plantation wages, and an end to military repression, the CUC developed a revolutionary ideology that rejected the legitimacy of the state and placed a united Indian-Ladino peasant movement squarely within the growing popular movement.

[17] Hale sees three key narrative frames that emerged from the violence: revolutionary triumphalism, the idea that Mayans needed the revolution to establish a truly emancipatory politics; two armies or "dos demonios", the notion that Mayan politics are community oriented, local, and that the war was imposed on them from both sides, and that they suffered the most consequences; and the Mayanista frame, which follows the two armies narrative except that it calls for a Pan-Mayan identity and a desire to reach across differences between Mayan communities. He rejects all of these as explanations for Mayan political activities and offers an alternative view of Mayan consciousness as complex, locally concerned but not 'anti-national'.

My chapter two examines some of additional reasons for the dominance of this two-army narrative, within the general framework outlined by Hale. None of these, according to Hale, make sense of Mayan political participation prior to the arrival of the guerilla, and the course of events that ensued afterwards.

[18] According to Hale (2006) revolutionary participation, in fact, has played a crucial role in the shaping of the Mayan movement, which later disavows these roots, focusing on a long-duree of struggles against colonialism.

[19] This is likely due to the fact that historical changes in national politics were not openly discussed by the DC or the PR, whose party platforms, in their silence, acknowledged the supremacy of the repressive apparatus of successive military regimes.

[20] There is a danger in that this argument could be taken to mean that in towns where indigenous were able to achieve some level of control and power would be less interested in joining the guerrilla movement. But why would Mayans abandon these national level objectives after winning a local victory, which, although sweet, would not do much to change their dire economic situation? Why would a local victory only lead to a more expansive sense of the types of social changes that would have been possible? Perhaps future comparative studies of indigenous communities will shed light on this question. It is also debatable that that the goals of Mayans were all so 'moderate', which seems to imply a focus on economic advancement and local power. There is a good deal of reason to think that Mayans, who travel to the coast, already had some critique of the plantation economy, just as stinging as the Marxist critique, albeit framed in distinctive narratives and concepts, and certainly not linked, in most minds at least, to a revolutionary struggle. Hale's association of 'radical' politics with the guerrilla ignores the possibility that there were local activists who were not guerrilla supporters yet who were nonetheless 'radicals'. This risks falling into some of the categories of "Mayan" politics that Hale is at pains to critique.

Chapter Two: The Slow and Uneven Thaw of Imposed Truth: Revolutionary Mayan Politics Reconsidered

"Me duele mucho cargarlos [huesos]... es como cargar la muerte... no voy enterrarlos todavía (...) Sí quiero que descanse, descansar yo también, pero todavía no puedo... Son la prueba de mi declaración ...no voy a enterrarlos todavía, quiero un papel que me diga a mí: 'lo mataron (...) y que no tenía delito, que era inocente...', entonces vamos a descansar."

"It hurts me a lot to carry them [the bones]. It's like carrying death. I'm not going to bury them yet. Yes, I want him to rest, and I want to rest myself, but I still can't. They are the proof of my declaration. I will not bury them yet, I want a paper that tells me 'they killed him, and he had not committed any crime, that he was an innocent…' then we will be able to rest."

-Back Cover, *Comisión Esclaramiento Historico* (1999)

"Y les dije [a los soldados] matame si quieren, pero se que no he hecho nada. Me van a matar y soy un inocente"

"And I told them [the soldiers] kill me if you want, but I haven't done anything. You're going to kill me and I am innocent"

-Sampedrano, recounting his interactions with the army at the military base during *La Violencia*

We know that memory fades, but can memories die? How does this happen, and what happens when people, activists and historians try to bring them back to life? This chapter focuses on public memories and perceptions of the guerrilla movement, violence and state repression in San Pedro Necta. Control of the truth, specifically of Mayan memories of the political past, has been a central aim of state repression and other governance strategies, including the guerrilla, in Guatemala for several decades. State monopoly of the truth, however, like their monopoly on power, has never been total. This chapter examines the conditions under which certain versions of San Pedro's past circulate publicly as truth, how other versions have become marginalized, and the impact that these patterns of remembering and forgetting have had on Sampedrano Mayans' political behaviors in the present, particularly their understanding of the scope and potential of Mayan politics. Recent political events and actors have allowed a dissenting perspective to germinate and gain ground in the fledgling public sphere. In relationship to these changes, Sampedranos' memories have shifted in unexpected ways.

MILITARY IMPOSED TRUTH

The dominant narrative about Mayan participation in the revolutionary movement in San Pedro at the time I did fieldwork in 2004 hews closely to the military's version of the facts. The people who circulate this narrative today are Ladinos. The specifics of this discourse vary, but include many of the following elements: Mayans did not want the military—obviously—but they never wanted the guerrilla in the first place. Those who supported the guerrilla were either coerced or tricked. Only very few were really involved in the guerrilla movement, and those were, for the most part, the ones who were killed. Most town Ladinos, while admitting to some errors, tend to view most of the

people killed by the military, prominent indigenous leaders especially, as guilty-as-charged. One politically active Ladino who had grown up in an outlying village known for excellent coffee production told me that the guerrillas in San Pedro were *contados* (few), and were found and killed immediately. In this perception, overall numbers were low, but the ones who were killed were certainly guilty. In addition, army violence was the guerrillas' fault for placing Mayans between "*dos fuegos.*" After inviting military repression, the guerrilla, true cowards, fled, leaving the population defenseless to face the wrath of the army. The guerrilla movement never had a prayer of changing power at the national level. Even if they did, the guerrillas' final goal— communism—was utterly bankrupt. It would require a rationing system that would take half of the land, chickens, and anything else of value from everyone, forcing them to go to the *alcalde* to ask for their weekly ration—no matter how much work a person did or how much need they had. In some versions, communism was itself just a sham—just a front for bad behavior: guerrillas were subversives, terrorists, atheists, delinquents, and thieves. They stole money and food, knocked down light posts, blew up bridges—everything working against the interest of the people that they supposedly were fighting to support. Not only did the guerrilla's presence make violence inevitable in this narrative, violence against the guerrilla was completely justified. The army was there to protect people from the subversives, reiterating the clear line between community and guerrilla. It was a form of defending Mayans from confusion, ideological misdirection, moral perdition, future poverty, hare-brained authoritarian governmental schemes, and crime. Community members voluntarily supported the civil patrols, because they were just as eager as the army to get the hated guerrilla out of their villages. State violence stopped Guatemala from becoming another Cuba, with all the negative implications that this carries.[1]

This framing of politics completely normalizes the massive social inequalities that characterize Guatemalan society. These narratives legitimate genocidal and indiscriminate attacks on Mayan communities. They completely ignore the fact that these attacks made no distinction between civilian and combatant, attacks that included torture and killed women, children and the elderly. They ignore that the massacres were far out of proportion to the guerrilla threat. They treat Mayans as infantile, weak-minded creatures, easily misled and unable to make responsible decisions about their future. They are too immature for democracy. They also completely disqualify revolutionary politics.

This version of reality and history was hammered into the minds of Mayan villagers by the army, Ladinos, and especially through the civil patrol system. When I was in San Pedro, an ex-village patrol captain showed me the ledger book used to record the minutes of the civil patroller meetings. Meeting minutes recount how villagers were routinely required to denounce the guerrilla, and hear and repeat admonishments and lectures about the dangerousness of human rights, communism and democracy. They listened while military officers and Ladino patrol captains from the town lectured to them about the evils of communism. The most common myth was that everyone would have to give up half of their land, no matter how much they had; and they had to bring everything they produced to the *alcalde*, whose job it would then be to ration out everyone's food. Most village men of over 35 years old could tell you all about 'communism'. Misinformation about violence was another strategy employed by the army to discredit the guerrilla. The military, taking advantage of its absolute monopoly on public modes of communication regularly blamed guerrillas for army violence (CEH 1999, REHMI 1999). There were several cases of this in San Pedro. In this chaotic and

insecure condition of nearly absolute military threat, surveillance, and confusion there were no alternative spaces for a counter-discourses.

During my fieldwork in 2004, I found that most Mayans in San Pedro, and many left-minded Ladinos, share a similar, but distinct memory of their political past. They remember Mayans, as "caught between two armies" during the internal conflict. They supported neither the army, nor the guerrilla. Mayans were neutral and innocent victims of both groups. Both sides were the same to them. Both were violent and both were responsible for bringing the violence to San Pedro. They view those killed by the army, especially indigenous leaders from the previous generation who were targeted by military strikes, as having no relationship to the guerrilla movement. Mayans express these views in their public memorial practices and public discourses about the past. These views also predominate in private memories and private conversations, even within families.

THEORIZING HISTORICAL MEMORY IN THE GUATEMALAN HIGHLANDS

As mentioned in the previous chapter, David Stoll (1993) takes Mayan expressions of the two armies discourse at face value. In *Between Two Armies,* Stoll also blames the guerrilla for provoking the violence. He argues that guerrilla commandos knowingly placed the communities in the line of fire in their attempt at revolt. Stoll scolds solidarity scholars who have contended that state violence was motivated by a desire to squash civilian opposition to army land grabs in the highlands. He concludes that in the Ixil territory, the guerrilla presence in rural communities led to military attacks, *not* that military attacks precipitated guerrilla membership. Moreover, he explains, these attacks backfired strategically and led to dramatic increases in guerrilla support that forced the military to resort to genocidal tactics. Stoll provides Mayan

testimony about guerrilla extortions of aid, recruits, information and other forms of loyalty from rural communities. Stoll reads the Ixil's mass abandonment of guerrilla forces following the attacks to mean that guerrillas who joined did so because they were forced to choose sides in a polarizing environment. Stoll refers to the Ixils as "dedicated neutralists." LeBot (1995) elaborates a position that is similar to Stoll's, attributing Mayan reticence to participate in revolutionary politics to their communal orientation and internal divisions between modernizing and traditional factions within Mayan communities.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Stoll's work has been attacked more than that of probably any other anthropologist working today.[2] The Truth Commission report is at pains to dispute the idea that the guerrilla was responsible for the violence, arguing instead that the vast inequalities of Guatemalan society, with their roots in colonialism, made armed conflict inevitable. Hale (1997) questions why Stoll refuses to consider in his analysis the possibility that fear of military reprisals in the context of Orwellian social control of the Guatemalan counterinsurgency apparatus might influence what types of public memories are available to ethnographers. Several have pointed out his omissions of critical information to make his case. Many also argue that this and subsequent work has been devastating to the cause of democratization in Guatemala, namely by his decision to write, in another book, an exposé of the narrative testimony of Rigoberta Menchú.

While overwhelmingly critical of the political implications of these conclusions, prominent scholars, and, I would argue, most Guatemalan Ladinos, seem unable to resist the fundamental assumptions of this perspective. Reviewing a recent ethnography of Mayan survivors is instructive on this point. Sanford (2003) criticizes Stoll and LeBot's blaming of the guerrilla for attacks on Mayan communities as an act of symbolic violence

complicit with military attempts to justify the massacres and whitewash genocide as the "killing of communists"(202-203). She argues that blaming the attacks on the guerrilla presence this plays into military discourses that claim that only guilty villagers were killed. Alliances with the guerrilla, she contends, are not sufficient to explain the army's targeted killing of civilians, including elderly and children. She presents ample evidence that, in many cases, 'Indian' meant 'guerrilla' to the army. She also says that by locating Mayans as either supporting or not supporting the guerrilla ignores "other alliances." As an alternative, she calls for a nuanced understanding of Mayan political allegiances during the armed conflict and argues that we need to listen to survivors' voices. She argues that ignoring Mayans potential alliance with the guerrilla erases their agency.

Yet for her, accurate representation of political alliances is impossible. Her definition of 'nuanced' appears to be the same as un-represenatable. She feels that it is impossible to discuss village alliances without reproducing an either or division or falling into counterinsurgency logic of guilt and legitimate violence. Is it possible to discuss Mayan support for the guerrilla movement without justifying military violence? As an alternative she offers the authority of survivor's voices. For her, Mayans, having lived through genocide are: "survivors who give testimony are speaking truth to power—whether the power of the army, guerrillas, local and national governments or the international community" (181). However, this leads her to wholeheartedly embrace Stoll and LeBot's central ethnographic conclusion—that Mayans were innocents "caught between two armies." Here again, Mayans occupy a pure space outside of and in opposition to power, which is universally oppressive and productive of false representations to mask itself. Despite her denials, her location within the two armies narrative is apparent throughout her description, based on oral history data of the wartime experiences of Ixiles from the village of Acul.

Villagers in Acul told Sanford how the guerrilla demanded villagers to follow them, making threats. She says that the villagers dug *buzones*, or underground chambers because they had to "follow guerrilla instructions" (85). The guerrilla presence led the army to commit a horrific massacre in their village, described by Sanford in sickening detail. Afterwards, surviving villagers followed the guerrilla into the mountains to seek refuge from the military, which had burned down their villages. There, villagers suffered inhuman deprivations and, under the constant threat of army attacks, guerrilla coercion grew more intense. Mayan mothers describe, for example, how they were ordered to smother and abandon children to keep the group hidden from the army. Later on, when military amnesty programs were announced to refugees by army helicopters flying over the mountains, villagers who wanted to leave were threatened by the EGP command; and some who attempted to flee were killed. When they eventually fled and made it back to Nebaj, they were tortured, forced to help the military search for the CPR communities that they had fled, and subject to numerous other forms of extreme abuse, including regularlized rape of women and girls, forced labor, and life in near starvation conditions—not to mention forced participation in the PAC. Sanford describes daily life for the Ixiles In the mountains a series of "balancing acts of survival between hunger, the guerrilla and the army" (101). Her position wavers a bit (86).[3] Her stance regarding local enthusiasm for guerrilla politics in the village, and later in the mountains, claims at times to be agnostic, but ultimately collapses into belief in the denials of active participation made by survivors.

But taking survivors' narratives as transparent representations of the truth leave the reader with an incoherent understanding of the consciousness of rural Mayans in the period leading up to massive state repression. There are many questions left unanswered by her rendering of the years leading up to the violence, 1976-1982. First, her story

about the local reluctance in participation does not match their seeming eagerness to comply with guerrilla directives. In San Pedro, even in the villages where the EGP was also strong, they ignored sectors that did not want to participate. Only the most committed dug *buzones*. It strikes me as odd that every member in a village had a *buzon* and yet felt a general indifference to the guerrilla cause. Her word is 'reluctant'. And, if the community members felt no allegiance to the guerrilla, why did villagers follow the EGP into the mountains? There is no evidence that they were forced to follow them. Her own narrative erases Mayan agency in the guerrilla movement just as neatly as Stoll's ethnography. The only difference, putatively, is that her ethnography relies on survivor's voices; thus Mayans erase their own agency. Another problem for Sanford's analysis is what to make of survivor's stories that do not articulate scathing criticisms of the military, or, in fact, follow state discourses? Her framework renders invisible the actual complexity of contemporary memories of the past.

McAllister (2003) suggests a more coherent corrective to the two armies discourse, arguing for the need to account for Mayan agency in the revolution. She finds evidence of support among Chajulenses, who today are embarrassed for having participated. Her interest is to refute Stoll's analysis empirically, showing that Mayans did indeed support the revolutionary movement, only to find out that their agency was not "efficacious." She argues that only by recognizing the prevalence of Mayan investments in the revolution can we appreciate Mayans as full, historical agents. The price for innocence is continued powerlessness. But McAllister does not examine the contemporary dominance of the frame that her own historical analysis tries to problematize.

This is Hale's (2006) project. He argues that we must to examine the different conditions under which these memories took root, and continue to flourish among

Mayans, who circulate them to pursue certain ends. Hale adopts a framework outlined by Rolph-Trouillot (1995), who distinguishes between two types of historicity: what "actually happened", which he calls "historicity one" and the narrative frames through which past facts are organized and interpreted, or "historicity two". In this view, events are never pre-given in themselves; their contours and meanings are constituted in the present through different narratives and memorial practices that inflect them in particular ways. Therefore, memories and narratives are always constrained and enabled by power relations. Historical narrative is important for Trouillot because he sees it as the condition for the possibility for the formation of different types of political agency in the present. It is toward these shifting possibilities for the construction of historical narratives about Mayan politics and their relationship to the possibilities for political thought and action in Mayan communities that Hale directs his energies. Hale explains the ascendance of the "two armies" frame emerged in a confluence of state and Mayan agency. The military, eager to establish a veneer of legitimacy in the newly razed highlands, opened space for criticism of military excesses in preparation for democratization, which most elements of the military saw as inevitable by 1983. Mayan "survivors" had a strong desire to:

> make sense of the nightmare of the previous few years. Religious mysticism (especially of the Evangelical variety), met that need for some; others sought refuge in sullen cynicism. Many others found in the dos demonios idea a reassuring, effective, and convincing source of common sense: a conflict between two military forces, equally self-interested and brutal, both victimizers of civilians caught haplessly in between. (2006, 94)

Mayans had every reason to disavow their prior involvement with or sympathy for the guerrilla under military occupation when the penalty for guerrilla involvement was death.

Hale argues that Mayans today confront a different dilemma: how to affirm their role as both protagonists in and victims of the armed struggle, in a political culture in

which, as Sanford notes, admitting involvement means admitting culpability, adopting a disqualified position within a narrative that justifies the violence. He differentiates the major contemporary historical narratives that have emerged from the violence by the way in which each of them resolves this paradox. As discussed in the last chapter, Hale identifies three frames—Mayanista, two armies and "revolutionary triumphalism—through which Mayans encounter the past. He argues that none of these explain the high degree of heterogeneity and fluidity of Mayan political participation in Chimaltenango, the department where he focused his investigation. The revolutionary frame now seems "anachronistic" and glosses over substantial problems with the guerrilla, especially divisions between indigenous intellectuals and leftist groups that grew as the war raged on. The Mayanista frame affirms Mayan agency after the conflict, but not in the years up to the conflict, a move Hale calls a "Faustian bargain" that runs the risk of undermining points of substantial overlap between these two political vectors, as well as some of the credibility, complexity and wisdom of these same Mayan actors in the present" (107). Hale attributes the ascendance of the *dos demonios* frame to the way that it approaches this central dilemma:

> Many civilians—Mayans and Ladinos alike—find in the dos demonios image a resonance with previous experience and a source of solace: as victims rather than protagonists, they have less burden of responsibility for the problems spawned by the violence, greater claim for redress and more room for maneuver in the present (108).

In this perspective, Mayans, like other academics, were persuaded by an economical truth with reasonable explanatory power, and gave them specific benefits. This interpretation is not without political consequences in the present. Hale argues that:

> Each narrative frame rests on certain categories of political consciousness (for example a distinction between Mayan cultural rights and popular or class demands) and certain political distinctions (for example, separating the Mayan movement from the Left), which later became to appear entirely self-evident, but

> which had not come to predominate during the volatile and heady years between 1976 and 1981. (2006, 87)

For Hale, the two armies frame represents the impossibility of a Mayan politics that includes leftist demands, or a leftist politics that appeals to Mayans' specific interests. In this view, these narrative frames undermine the possibility of imagining the conditions under which Mayans can pursue radical politics and still be Mayan, and under which Mayans and Ladinos can work together in a unified movement. The concern is that this historical consciousness, while challenging traditional Marxist categories, also closes the imaginative space necessary for a politics that combines anti-racism with an appreciation of the need for many of leftist economic and political reforms.

Although I do not feel that the notion of 'persuasion' is adequate to describe this transformation, historical narratives in San Pedro—nearly ten years after the Peace Accords—fit the pattern described by Hale, and bear out much of its conclusions regarding of the stakes of these public memories. The very one-sided interpretation of reality and of the Mayan political past promoted by the military has shown some resilience. This is, in part, as described in the last chapter, rooted in the fact that many Sampedranos experienced the arrival of the guerrilla as an imposition from the beginning. Even more became disillusioned with the guerrilla after the violence. Another obstacle is forgetting. Without any process to keep narratives about the past alive in the present, these narratives will wither and die. Of course, many Sampedranos never knew in the first place: the younger generation of Sampedranos never had first-hand experience with the guerrilla movement. And in San Pedro, unlike in many highland communities, there has been no collective process of mourning and memorialization.

Ethnographic fieldwork revealed additional factors in shaping individual decisions to circulate certain narratives of the past. I show how contemporary challenges

to official discourses run into the obstacle of the new identities whose status and legitimacy are founded upon the rejection of participation in revolutionary politics in the past. The denial of the revolutionary past continues to be motivated by numerous factors, including: fear; shame; desire for legitimate victim status; and political opportunism. State approved norms for political subjectivity are populated by new forms of identity to which many Mayans have developed powerful attachments. However, my research also revealed a rupture in the two armies narrative. Since the Peace Accords, although many community members have begun to openly question this interpretation, dominant public discourses and memorial practices still show much continuity with the military views on the facts. This rethinking, while incomplete, is a real desire for many Sampedranos, especially those who never ideologically abandoned the revolution.

EMERGENCE AND DOMINANCE OF THE TWO ARMIES NARRATIVE IN SAN PEDRO

The dominant interpretation today departs drastically from the dominant view of the guerrilla movement prevalent among indigenous Sampedranos in the late 1970s. Obviously, however, the threat of state violence shaped public discourse about the guerrilla since the beginning. It was never legitimate to identify as a guerrilla supporter in the town. Even when the guerrilla was at its apex in 1981 in San Pedro, no one would say it publicly. From the time of the guerrilla's arrival, such an admission was tantamount to signing a death sentence. Clandestinity was an absolute necessity. The cell system ensured that many guerrilla operatives did not know the names of more than a few participants. Participants had plausible deniability and a reduced ability to implicate others. The primary aim of regular, certain and unremitting violence was to strike terror into the hearts of those who witnessed, or became aware of, these acts of brutality. Torture in the military base had the additional stated purpose of finding out information

about supposed participants. However, for several years between 1978 and 1982, it was considered legitimate by many villagers, even respectable to identify as a guerrilla supporter. In fact, in some villages during this period it was much more dangerous to speak out publicly against the guerrilla. The deaths of several military commissioners—including one in Canoguitas in 1981 and in Michicoy in May of 1982 (CEH 1998, casos 5529 and 5500) and possibly others that were not recorded by the Truth Commission—stemmed, at least in part, from their neighbors' fears that they would report guerrilla activity. To a certain degree, neighbors knew who in the village was and who was not a guerrilla sympathizer, who was training as a combatant, where the guerrilla combatants in the village stayed, locations of any traps and trenches dug by the combatants, where food was stored, who was messenger, and other similar details.

This relative acceptance of the guerrilla and relative openness within communities regarding guerrilla involvement was shattered as state violence increased sharply in 1982. Afterwards, the constant presence of the military meant that the simple accusation of guerrilla involvement could bring death at the hands of an army uninterested in investing individual cases. In addition to a network of Mayan spies, who were rewarded monetarily for denouncing fellow villages to the military, military power in communities was enhanced and members of the PAC increasingly abandoned their stance of *doble cara* (two faces). Having witnessed massacres of their neighbors or hearing of rampant violence in neighboring *aldeas*, most communities, regardless of prior involvement, became anti-guerrilla for reasons of survival. During the intense violence and after the consolidation of patroller authority, the relative openness regarding involvement was shut down entirely. It was now incredibly risky to give an open opinion or knowledge of involvement to neighbors. Even family members had turned against each other. In many cases, trust broke down, compromising space for non-manipulated communication.

Continued violence against military commissioners—there were several in 1982 and 1983—in villages indicates a growing uncertainty about survival, as does the fact that people who were openly known as guerrilla supporters or combatants began to flee in large numbers to Mexico. Clandestine support continued in several communities where investment in the revolutionary movement was strongest, but nothing like the widespread support that had existed previously.

Denial as Community Defense Mechanism

Villagers, distraught by the death of close family members and friends, by the threat that their name was on a list to be executed, or with the fear that their entire village had been scheduled to be destroyed by the army, began a very vocal and desperate process of publicly denouncing any involvement with the guerrilla. I some cases, feeling that the army would suspect at least *some* individuals in each *aldea*, villagers in some communities began to blame their neighbors, often from other families, for guerrilla involvement, even though all had been involved at similar or exact levels. In most cases, however, the community members circled their wagons. Many took great pride in their ability to protect themselves and their neighbors from the army:

> We didn't completely organize with the guerrilla. We were together with one idea. We named a person from the community to be the spokesperson. If there was a problem in the pueblo, then there goes the moshera [spokesperson] like a wasp. We didn't let them kill us. We didn't let the Ladinos dominate us. "Who is advising you?' We are advising ourselves. We had ourselves trained not to point the finger at anyone, ever.

When the guerrilla did pass, most did not report anything, just remained quiet, out of fear that a report would bring the army to the village. One evening, I listened while village leaders from different religious and political affiliations recounted proudly how they kept silent, told the military nothing and kept their neighbors alive. One of these men was an

ex-military commissioner. Although he did not support the guerrilla, he was more strongly opposed to army attempts to kill villagers.

Problem of 'doble cara' for Historical Memory

Many have commented on the power of the oft-repeated lie in creating truth. One particularly telling example of this during the war was the notion that the civil patrollers were voluntary. This was not only true in the sense that no one would openly dissent from it. Later, as the PAC began to take on a productive role in the community organization, specifically for development goals, many influential community members became more invested in the existence of the patrols. Some today, while recognizing their abuses and the hard work that went along with patrolling, lament the lack of community organization.

Participating in the civil patrollers made community members into the agents in the army's strategies of repression. Regardless of their personal feelings, community members became complicit in violence against neighbors and even family members who did not follow the orders to the letter, hence risking community safety. This complicity creates cognitive dissonance, which leads to repression of thoughts and feelings that run counter to the logic of the act that one is performing. Some villagers who previously supported the guerrilla undertook these duties with zeal, even becoming oppresors themselves. Even those with "doble cara" had to confront the nagging truth of the fact that they themselves were the army that they hated. In some, this likely led to a revision of past feelings to fit more closely with the military interpretation of reality, and within which their actions were ethical. It is hard to determine with precision the extent of this form of enacting state violence on community memory, but it is impossible to discount it as a contributing factor.

Fear and Shame

Fear continues to play a role in public memory about political participation. Many expressed fear of interviews, even when political involvement was not the specific issue to be addressed, quite worried that their name and interview responses would later appear on a list that could possibly fall into the hands of someone, most likely the army, who could do damage, even ten years after the war was over. Not only does almost no one talk about it publicly, but there were many people who I knew, on the basis of extensive conversations with many other people who were willing to talk, had participated in the guerrilla at least in the early days of 1976-1981—some even had leadership positions—but were absolutely unwilling to discuss these matters with me. Most of these people had been accused for decades of having participated. Most of them have had their lives threatened and have seen some of their closest friends tortured and killed. One of these people, who finally agreed to talk with me after months of avoiding an interview and denying knowledge, told me that there are still people in town who work with the military and would not hesitate for a moment to kill someone. He thought that the work that I was doing, writing the history of San Pedro, was dangerous. He warned me that my dredging up of the past could stir up problems, even if I left out the names of specific individuals. Apologizing profusely, he refused an interview and asked to be left out of my study.

Here is a excerpt from an interview I conducted with a the male heads of household of a family who many other villagers assured me were enthusiastic participants in the guerrilla:

> We didn't have any part in the guerrilla. At least my uncle didn't participate. My father, no, he didn't participate either. They didn't carry a weapon. Those that did participate only gave them [the guerrilla] tortillas. But to go and fight? Not at all. Why are they in favor of Ríos Montt now, those that participated? In that time, a person doesn't forget. When a person participates they never forget. We're talking about the URNG and those that are still around. They are never

> going to help Ríos Montt. They had weapons. They already did that. But in our particular case here we didn't have anything. What I mean is that we didn't take [the revolution] into account. And then later, like my uncle said, it calmed down after Ríos Montt. [The PAC] was a good thing for the people. And then Ríos Montt himself thought about paying the people a little for their work. We gained our compensation. Who doesn't want money? That's why we wanted that candidate.

This response was typical of the people I interviewed. This man, in his early 30s, (so he would have been a little kid in the 1980s) denies any involvement on the part of his family. He emphasizes carrying a weapon as the threshold for guerrilla involvement. He admits that some others might have helped, because they were forced and only with food, but that his family did not even do this much. Later on, an individual, a young man in his late 20s and a schoolteacher, a family member who was present in this interview, approached me privately, eager to discuss the family's participation in the guerrilla movement, and how their family has suffered as a result. He says that their family members who live in Mexico, where they fled after the war, now, on the rare occasions when they visit, only visit one of the family members and not all of them.

Part of this family's motivation to not be associated with the guerrilla movement—well after the fear of retribution by the state had diminished substantially—was their guilt for having been involved in guerrilla violence in their own village. He went on to express anger at the fact that other families in the village always make fun of their family for having participated. A cousin of this family told me that:

> During the war, everyone in the village was in favor of the guerrilla. Then after the civil patrols, the other families turned against them, and blamed our family for participating. The guerrilla says a good thing […] that they're going to struggle for the poor. But where? How? What happened? The army came to kill and they couldn't defend them."

Perhaps most determinative element in the contemporary denial was the then obvious fact of the military defeat of the guerrilla. There was a profound feeling of disappointment in

the guerrilla. Military emphasis on the fact that the guerrilla had abandoned the communities and never intended to protect them seemed like a fact. Compounding this feeling of abandonment was a sense of shame. It was common for community members to feel foolish for having ever thought that the cause was winnable. Many began to feel ashamed, and tricked by the guerrilla. This shame was enhanced by criticisms launched by neighbors who might have participated at lower levels of involvement or not at all.

Feelings of guilt for participating in the violence associated with the guerrilla movement—violence in many cases committed against one's neighbors—may be one of the most powerful factors in the contemporary denial of guerrilla politics among Mayans. It is likely that these denials prevent community level discussions about responsibility for such acts, a lack of accountability that in turn precludes the possibility of forgiveness, keeping long-standing community rifts intact. I was struck by the fact that the younger generation of family members, too young to have participated in the guerrilla movement themselves, were just as, and in some ways more, vocally opposed to the implication that their family members had been involved than were their parents, the ones who were actually participating in those years. In addition to fear, shame and guilt, a multitude of intervening factors reinforced community members' desires to conform to the two armies discourse and deny their willing involvement in the revolution.

Mourning Legitimate Victims

One of the most profound expressions of the "two army" discourse emerging in this context comes from family members and friends of individuals who were killed by the military. The deaths of these individuals and the meaning of their deaths has been a key site in the construction of public memories regarding the violence in San Pedro, as it has been in other Mayan villages throughout the highlands. In San Pedro the dominant tendency is for family members to deny any involvement that their loved ones might have

had with the guerrilla, insisting that they were innocent of the crime for which they were assassinated. This occurs for a number of reasons.

While in San Pedro, I witnessed how Concepción, a war widow, mourns her deceased husband Raul, a locally famous and respected indigenous leader who was killed by the military in the early 1980s on the grounds that he was a guerrilla. Sampedranos who knew I was studying local politics and wartime history urged me to speak with Concepción. "*Es una viuda, una victima. Vayas a hablar con ella!*" (She's a widow, a victim. Go talk to her!) one prominent Ladino told me when I told him I was doing a study of town history. Unlike the majority of war widows, Concepción is *Ladina* who married Raul in the early 1970s—a mixed marriage being very uncommon at that time and still. She still has the good-natured, somewhat irreverent humor appropriate to a cantina owner. Although she is Ladina, her mourning practice is exemplary of indigenous widows of past indigenous leaders, most of who tended to be middle class and to reside in the urban center. As we began to meet and talk about town politics and history, our conversations often, through both of our prodding, turned towards her husband. I had already heard of Raul from conversations that I had had with other Sampedranos who I had asked about local political history. I knew that his brother was a candidate. I thought that Concepción might tell me something about who her husband was, what he hoped and believed. I was curious.

Raul was well known throughout San Pedro as an outspoken and respected indigenous leader. Sampedranos remember Raul as one of the first indigenous primary school teachers in the town. He had a strong personality, and was fairly intimidating because he was quite tall and spoke with a booming voice. As a teacher and in public life, I was told by many, Raul adamantly and vocally supported the then radical idea that indigenous people were equal to Ladinos, that they could become just as smart and

educated, and should be treated, and carry themselves, accordingly. After normal school hours, he stayed on and taught older men from the village to read and write, always encouraging them. And he talked about politics.

Unsolicited, and in gruesome detail, Concepción told me of how Raul, along with his brother, was tortured, executed, and their bodies disposed of in the river Selegua below the town. Raul was one of the first of the visible community leaders in San Pedro to be killed by the army. He was grabbed away publicly and people heard his screams all night coming out of the military base in the town. She describes in detail how the army tortured Raul. *"They cut him all over his body. Then they cut out his tongue when he would not talk."* As she was speaking, I wondered how she knew they had cut out his tongue, or that he had not given away any secrets. He was one the last one to be killed by the army; afterwards Concepción recalls that the army began "*agarrando parejo*" (grabbing people, almost randomly). After he and his brother were murdered, the rest of his brothers and his sister were forced to flee to Mexico, and Canada. As Concepción laments the cruelty and arbitrariness of Raul's fate, she denies that he ever participated in the revolution, saying that *"El no tenia delito."* (He had no crime) That this statement is intended to give an additional emotional charge to her story is evident in the manner of her speech and the silence that follows.

In Concepción's narrative, several powerful Ladinos had Raul killed to maintain their privilege over municipal resources. As discussed in the first chapter, several powerful local Ladino politicians were attempting to claim communal land for their own profit. When Raul and his brothers led the charge against these attempts at appropriation in the name of the community, the Ladinos vindictively denounced him and his brother to the military on the grounds that they were guerrillas. Raul and his brothers had been key figures in the movement that become the flashpoint issue in three indigenous mayoral

bids from progressive parties in the 1970s. His brother lost the mayoral race in 1978 because the national party candidate was killed two weeks before the election. But the land was returned to the municipality. "Look how useful that land is now," Concepción proudly commented, "It has the *instituto*" [the local public high school] and also a community slaughterhouse." In her telling, Raul martyred himself for the indigenous people. "He was working for the community," she recalls, adding disdainfully the comment that "the mayor today [a Mayan] is a *chucho por el pisto*."

Most local Mayans I spoke with who knew Raul follow the narrative strategy proposed by Concepción. They claim not to know for sure, but say that they think Raul was not guerrilla. Others disagree. Most Ladinos, for instance, subscribe to the military's view that those killed were mostly guerrillas. There are several indigenous people who will readily mark Raul as a revolutionary. Members of one family in particular blame Raul for giving the order to kill their father, a military commissioner and contractor for the *finca* who publicly opposed the guerrilla. More interestingly, it also differs from the memory of surviving Mayans who were former leaders of the guerrilla movement—many of whom had since fled. I was able to speak to one such leader on his annual visit back to the township from Mexico on a hot Day of the Dead. As several other local formers leaders had done, he discussed Raul's role as a local leader of the guerrilla movement. Like others, he spoke fondly and nostalgically of their work together. He told me how Raul would visit the remote villages to talk to leaders and garner support for the guerrilla.

Concepción, like so many other Guatemalan war widows, was incredibly brave. She publicly and stridently denounced the killing. She openly advanced her moral criticism of her husband's death, even reported his death to the authorities, all to no avail. Central to her claim was the fact that the state had no evidence and Raul had no trial. She also sought compensation from the state. At first she was denied his teacher's insurance

policy, but eventually received it. She has tried repeatedly to get a *resarcimiento* (retribution) payment, even asking if I could help by taking her case to an institution. She was not sure which one. She is disgusted with the state's failure to make good on its promise to make retribution payments and appalled at the way the *resarcimiento* process has been politicized. Her hatred for the army and the government is obvious in her speech. I said that I could not help her.

Although it is not my place to speculate on the truth or falsity of this narrative, there were reasons why Concepción might want to deny Raul's revolutionary past, if that is indeed what she did. My sense is that her story was shaped by a certain conception of legitimate victim-hood that formed in the period after the intense violence and was therefore over-determined by the threat of violence and the postwar associations sutured to the idea of the guerrilla. These meanings required the deceased be understood as innocent when killed to be legitimate or worthy of mourning. By showing the state's negligence of its own standards of evidence, it points to an internal hypocrisy in state logic. Conceding this logic enabled family members to speak of the injustice of their spouses' deaths. The discourse of innocent victim-hood allowed public criticisms of the military but avoided state reprisals; it also avoided recrimination for local excesses on the part of the guerrilla; and it allowed for the possibility of material benefits for the family members. The insistence on innocence performed a subtle operation that balanced the peculiar needs of this situation. Denying participation allowed Concepción to remember Raul as a martyr for indigenous rights, a hero, and not a pathetic criminal, or murderer, who 'deserved' to die.

Widows are particularly encumbered with gendered expectations of comportment. Her responsibility is to take care of the reputation of her husband. It was of course her obligation as wife to grieve. It is also expected that she defend the legacy of her husband.

This caretaking needs to be done according to her estimations of the climate in which that memory is produced. It must conform to her understanding of community expectations about what is and is not proper behavior. It is not simply his memory at stake. Her identity and honor is deeply entangled in the reputation accorded to her deceased husband.

Regardless of whether or not Concepción is "telling the truth," were one were to believe the denials of most of those whose family members were killed by the military, one would have to believe that no indigenous leaders in the 1970s supported the guerrilla movement. This would make it difficult to explain the widespread support for the guerrilla in the township prior to the arrival of the violence, a fact that, as I describe in the first chapter, became increasingly unavoidable through fieldwork. Although many individuals know very well how widespread participation in the guerrilla movement was during the late seventies, few admit this publicly.

Human Rights Discourses and Moral Equivalence

Human rights discourses have criticized military violence. In the past, violence against the guerrilla was completely justified. Since the Peace Accords, however, human rights workers and institutions, especially the Truth Commission Reports and the REHMI project done by the Catholic Church, to criticize the state's use of violence. This emergence of this discourse gives weight to the criticism of the state leveled by family members of war victims. But human rights discourses cut both ways, helping to reinforce the perspective of two armies. There is a new tendency in human rights discourses to denounce both sides of the violence on the grounds that both sides were human rights abusers. There is a leveling tendency in this discourse, at least in the manner in which it is popularly understood, which is less clear about making distinction between different human rights abusers: all of them are bad. It is certainly fruitless to

compare human rights abuse to another, or advocate one over another. But with the recognition that at some level, a human rights violation is as bad as any other, there is an evacuation of the investigation of the differences in the ethical grounding of the different producers of human rights abuse—what was each side fighting for?—as well as the extent of the abuses committed, and the number of rights abuses committed by each group. This is the conception of human rights that dominates public discourse in San Pedro. Furthermore, the notion of human rights is not incompatible with military conceptions of criminality. This notion was made clear to be by Arnulfo, a community leader and ex-candidate for mayor, in response to my question as to whether or not he thought the violence was justified, and who, or what, he thought was responsible for the violence. In these interviews, most Mayans said that both groups were guilty, and several blamed the military directly. Arnulfo elaborated on the first position, suggesting that human rights style verification would have been necessary to legitimate military violence against guerrillas:

> [the violence] was not justified. Because the people they killed, some of them had not committed a crime. One time in Chemiche [a local aldea] there was a man from Santiago Atitlan. He was mentally ill. He would go house to house asking for food, clothes, somewhere to sleep. Who knows how the army found him. They said he was a guerrilla and hung him under the bridge. He wasn't a guerrilla, and that was unjust. Neither the government nor the guerrilla is responsible for the violence. Neither were justified. Figure out who are the people involved in the guerrilla. They should have done it like that. Make a diagnostic. Who are those who are most involved with the guerrilla. Look closely; justify it well. In the same way that they do it in Derechos Humanos (human rights). Look clearly at the individuals who are the most guilty and pull them up by the roots. But they [the army] grabbed whoever. Those who had committed crimes, those that didn't—the same.

He is referring here to the practice of the local representatives of human rights who defend people accused of criminal acts. Instead of assuming their guilt, there needs to be a trial and a process of gathering evidence, until incontrovertible proof is found. This

criticism of the overreach of military violence is also applicable to the guerrilla, as he explains:

> How great it would have been if [the guerrilla] had gone directly to the government to debate in order to improve the situation. […] No one worried to say, "Look, men, let's not kill anymore. It would be better if we quit.

Whether or not this solution would have worked—indeed the military state brooked no dissent—is irrelevant. What is important is the way that new standards of legality merge with military definitions of illegality to produce a new narrative of history.

Capacidad

There is one additional factor that amplifies the argument that I have developed thus far I will only briefly mention here because I discuss it in much more length in chapters 5 and 7. I suggest that the notion of *capacidad* has helped to effect a retroactive reframing of the decision by many Mayans to participate in the revolution. My friend cited ignorance as the main factor that led Mayans to believe the stories of reform. Level headed people with *capacidad* would know better that hopes for political reform are naive and unrealistic. This relies on reading the history backward, as if state violence was an inevitable result of revolutionary attempts to capture the state. On a related notes, I have heard many Mayans criticize the guerrilla practice of knocking down posts that hold up electricity lines, as well as bridges. These complaints appeared to be heartfelt criticisms of what they saw as pointless protests, the costs of which were really only borne by the population itself, and had no real effect on the government.

Evangelical Historicity

The evangelical church's stance on violence, similar to the human rights stance, denounces all violence equally. Evangelical religions espouse a very different view of history, removing historical agency from the actors and placing it in the hands of God.

Such an interpretation has been brought to bear on public attitudes of some evangelical followers of Ríos Montt. While in San Pedro, I befriended an indigenous evangelical preacher, Ernesto, a lay preacher who led Sunday worship services at a small new church in Los Altenses. Ernesto was a very intelligent man, who had studied the Bible. He always had a smug, self-assured attitude about his belief, completely certain that he was smarter or better informed than those around him. His historical narrative drew from the same authoritative sensibility:

> "Doesn't the Bible say that there is going to be war, nation against nation, neighbor against neighbor? The only thing that people can do in times of war is to try not to get involved and to pray to God for it to end. Ríos Montt is not responsible. It was his job. He had no choice. This is going to happen. He should not be judged. They can't do anything to him any way. Ríos Montt is fuerte. This case is political[ly motivated]. The only reason they want to bring this case against him is because he is a presidential candidate and they don't want him to win."

Some evangelical churches promote a perspective of divine history to converts, outside of human design or influence. Everything is a part of God's plan. Becoming involved in making political value judgments is futile, and rooted in a lack of appreciation for the absolute agency of God in determining the outcome of individual lives. There is no space in this conception for individual responsibility for the ethical implications of political processes happening in one's own community, much less in the country at large. People's responsibility is to obey and to worship God, and that is the extent of their responsibility. From this perspective, remembering the violence is a senseless endeavor. However, this is an extreme position, and not voiced by the majority of evangelicals who I met, most of whom were concerned much more with the ethics of politics.

Political Opportunism

Today, Sampedranos have other personal interests in circulating these and related conceptions of history. When an individual takes an active role in supporting a political

party, especially the FRG, it is necessary that they adopt a conception of history that makes this decision seem rational. The FRG launched an official version of history that whitewashes Ríos Montt's implication in the violence of the past. One prominent FRG supporter, an older man who once upon a time was an avid supporter of the guerrilla movement told me that, *"The massacres were Lucas Garcia. Ríos Montt came in and formed the patrols. Things calmed down. And now, Ríos Montt had the idea to pay the patrols."* In this view, Ríos Montt was the savior who ended the violence, instead of the general who gave the order to attack civilians by the thousands. This chronology is not accurate. The most intense wave of military violence in the highlands took place after Ríos Montt took power by military coup in 1981. Another FRG supporter, a much younger man, repeated a similar version:

> In that time there was war. The military and the guerrilla. When Ríos Montt was governing Guatemala, the thing was calming down. When he made the law that the people patrolled, so that they took care of themselves, of each other. And that is where the war went calming down. But the people say that that was by Ríos Montt's doing when many were killed. I had a very young age in that time. But I have learned many things, that it wasn't Ríos Montt, it was Lucas Garcia. But when Ríos Montt came in the thing calmed down. Perhaps some people were killed in this time but it wasn't his doing. Rather sometimes between themselves. There are times they sell us out in another municipio and from there they come and grab us. They say it was Ríos Montt but I don't believe it, with the little opportunity that I have. The other thing is that I didn't see it. The one who knows the most is our God. I could perhaps easily say that it was him. But I didn't see anything. We don't have any proof. How are we going to judge our neighbor?

When I asked the first FRG supporter why he thought that the patrols were a good thing now, when at the time he opposed them, he had no answer, but he held to this clearly contradictory version of the facts. All of those who support the party easily denounce the allegations against Ríos Montt as political opportunism of those from other parties who want to gain power. One version of history, the logic seems to be, is just as valid as

another: all stem from political interest in one form or another. Those who felt no allegiance to the guerrilla movement, or who were not alive during the time have less trouble in adopting this party-specific version of history. I detected cognitive dissonance, or, more accurately, embarrassment, in my conversations with those who had supported the revolution, and now align with the FRG. Accepting whatever benefits might be associated with their current political participation requires the negation of a strongly held past identity. This is no small loss. It requires the identification with the army and a denial of revolutionary desire. Such denial is perhaps aided by a sense that these desires are unrealistic, a theme I will explore in depth in the next chapter. Nevertheless, in addition to the alternative version of history, these individuals tended to want to avoid direct examination of the subject. On the other hand, FRG supporters who were too young in the early 1980s to have formed an opinion based on their own memories are less apt to feel uneasy with the exculpatory historical narrative. They have no proof. Interestingly, both men would agree publicly that participation in the mass killing of Mayans would discredit Ríos Montt *if it were true*. No one in the villages that I spoke to, even FRG party higher ups, would ever say that the violence in the early 1980s was justified, even those who blame the guerrilla for provoking it, they still say that it was unwarranted, a grave violation of human dignity.

Political Disorientation

That certain periods of time are unavailable to the collective consciousness for a long while has resulted in a public amnesia on the part of the general public, especially members of the younger generation. This amnesia extends to many politicians, especially the younger generation. However, it seemed very exaggerated and acute in the newly elected FRG *alcalde*, Mariano Díaz. The man was an impressive public speaker, and an accomplished comedian, but he made some amazing gaffes about national history. One

day, I was in attendance when Mariano had been asked to speak at the inauguration of a new Mayan-oriented development organization in the town. In his somewhat rambling, yet forcefully delivered, comments, his lack of knowledge about the armed conflict became painfully clear to a large audience of people, none of whom reacted as if there was anything wrong:

> For thirty five years there was war. We ruined this country. And why?...I don't know. But now we are at peace. How do we achieve peace? Being at home, with the family. As parents we give good educations to our children and they go developing in the future. San Pedro Necta has a hospital, it has a bank, it has various development associations—now it has one more—there will be a road with asphalt. Everything is going to bring more money, more business to San Pedro.

Mariano has no idea why the war started and, apparently does not care. It, whatever it was, is irrelevant. Why? Because now there is development. Mariano's version of peace entails individual, private acts of familial bonding and education. Collective struggle has no place in this narrative. The revolution is of trivial importance. I was not the only person who was dizzied by this non-sequitor display of ignorance regarding the most significant period in town history.

Later that day, I met with a Mayan woman in her early 50's, Paola, who was visiting town from Mexico, where she had lived as a refugee since 1982, when the army had kidnapped and murdered her two oldest brothers. Her entire family fled. Paola was visiting for a month, and had come for the Day of the Dead. Paola's brother and husband were both prominent indigenous activists. Although many of my trusted informants insisted on it, Paola refused to admit any relationship between them, or anyone that they knew, and the guerrilla movement. She even said that she never knew anything about 'those groups'. Here was an exile, just as steeped as the family members she was coming back to see in the "two armies" narrative. I had not noticed that she had attended the

meeting where Mariano spoke that day. While I was asking her questions about town history in the late 1970s, she started talking about her job in the church. She worked there together with her best friend, a young, educated and beautiful Mayan woman from the town who was killed by the army:

> My friend. She worked with the nuns. […] We went to school together. She was from here in the town center. She got married, and I did not. She was very beautiful. They killed her. Why? I don't know… as Mariano Díaz says!

Paola was disgusted when she remembered Marino's comment, involuntarily in the course of her memory. For her, he was stealing the significance of her friend's death. It showed that Marino did not know who he was or where he had come from. "And why are you here, an indigenous man as Mayor! Why are people paid a decent wage now on the *finca* if you don't know?" She was almost yelling. Calming down, she said:

> "I was very mad that day [that Mariano spoke]. They didn't give people who wanted to talk the chance to speak. We went on to something else. Some of [the people there] don't know why. 'I know why' I would have said. I would have stood up. Cae mal (it makes me mad).

It might be reasonable to think that the public speech I described was a performance. Perhaps it is just political opportunism, having to say something, so saying something vague. After meeting and knowing Mariano Díaz, however, I realized that he had little conceptions of the stakes of past political struggles. I was unable to interview him at length. He was suspicious of me, and everyone around him, and for good reason, when he first came to power (CEH 1999, casos 5529, 5500). More than half of the town hated him. He had probably received death threats from defeated members of other political parties or from the leaders of the ex-PAC who did not receive their payments. His malapropisms are famous throughout the town. Jokes about stupid things the *alcalde* said, or is said to have stolen, are regular fodder for the powerful town rumor mill. Simply put, Mariano was not at all knowledgeable about politics. This was probably

what he was most embarrassed about and afraid that I would find out if he let me interview him. He had to be taught some very basic things. I had several conversations with Juan, a man who had worked as a political advisor to Mariano, a young, professional Mayan. One of these conversations came at the end of my fieldwork. I was pretty savvy about local politics, and had adopted a jaded perspective, in hopes that it would make people I was talking to cut past the party lines and tell me what they were really thinking. I began to press him about Mariano, pointing to his obvious incompetence. He admitted that:

> He's pretty bad. It's true. During the campaign he would say some very stupid things. Once he told a town of people that he knew he was going to be mayor when he was in his mothers' womb. I heard that and felt embarrassed. We told him later 'better just talk about development. That's what the people need. But Mariano isn't any worse than anyone else'.

Juan is correct, almost. Lots of people are confused about history, even people who have studied. Jeremias is a young Mayan man who was graduating high school when I lived in Los Altenses. Jeremias is fairly serious, and a good student. He was very curious about my study, and also wanted to talk with my about what it was like to live in the US. Like most people his age, he had thought about going after graduation. The day we spoke was September 15, 2004, national Independence Day in Guatemala. All morning there had been parades in the town, all the schoolchildren marching and carrying images of the national flag, the *quetzal* (the nearly extinct national bird, for which the national currency derives its name), singing songs and reading poems. Curious, I asked him what Independence Day meant to him. He told me a story about school. He said in his last year he had taken a class on Guatemalan history when he was reading a book he found out that indigenous people had lived through:

> 500 years of exploitation and slavery!? When I read this it was like the mountain fell on top of me. 500 years? Why hadn't anyone ever told me? We never

> studied anything like that in primera or basica (elementary and middle schools). I was so angry. I think they should teach these things at a younger age. And then we have to read poems about Guatemala Linda (nationalist poem). We don't even know what Guatemala is. It's terrible.

Seeing someone as mild-mannered as him so incensed, I was taken aback. But his feelings were understandable. We didn't talk about the war in that conversation. No doubt this is a part of his memory he would be surprised to learn about as well.

POSTWAR THAW OF MILITARY IMPOSED MEMORIES

For the reasons discussed, vehement refusals to admit any relationship between Mayans and the revolutionary movement remained the norm from 1982 until 1996. This "public amnesia" is an important part of the conditions under which neo-authoritarian populism becomes thinkable for many Mayans. But something very distinct seems to be placing these understandings in question today. New spaces opened by the Peace Accords and the absence of a military presence have led to substantial challenges in these common sense understandings of politics and history. The main reason for this is democratization. There is no permanent military presence in communities; the patrols are disbanded; and leftist parties and social movements exist without retribution. In this context, fear is not the factor in shaping public and private memory that is once was. As a result, public versions of the truth, long calcified, began to shift, if not reverting to previous forms of thought, the loosening of previously unquestioned truths on public discourse has been nonetheless impressive.

The re-emergence of revolutionary parties in town politics also has introduced new interpretations of the past and present into public discourse. The URNG is a significant political force in San Pedro now, as evidenced by their third place finish in the 2003 elections. An oppositional version of history is the mainstay of this party's success.

They champion the goals of the revolutionary movement past and present; criticize the fundamental injustice of the state in creating poverty; denounce and seek retribution for past state violence; and oppose mining concessions and the Free Trade Amendment. They also speak openly about past participation in the guerrilla movement, denying that the guerrilla movement was responsible for the violence, especially the massacres which they see as genocidal.

Human rights has also emerged and taken on a completely new significance. There is an office of human rights in the township. *Asociación* CEIBA's discourses on human rights and politics are a strong reinforcement to this leftist discourse. Many Sampedranos, especially since the Peace Accords, openly question the brutality of the army's through the highlands. Many hate Ríos Montt, and call him an *asesino* and a *genocidio*. This was prevalent during the last electoral campaign, when Ríos Montt launched his by all counts illegal candidacy for president.

The Catholic Church is another powerful participant in a forming a new conception of history. In 2003, they launched a campaign against Ríos Montt on the basis of his role in the scorched earth campaign. The Church advocated no party in particular, but stridently denounced Ríos Montt. *Catequistas* and local *animadores* received courses that helped orient their vote. I met several people who, as part of the curriculum in their high school, took a course that discussed the findings of the Catholic Church's historical memory reports. Another sign that these alternative voices is the emergence of a relatively widespread historical understanding about the guerrilla's role in the recent political history of the country.

A large number of people who were opposed to the guerilla movement now believe that the guerrilla was integral to the signing of the Peace Accords, something that almost everyone in the town saw as a good thing. The advent of the Peace Accords has

cleared space for a rethinking of the guerrilla movement. Almost all of the scores of people that I asked said that when they found out about the Accords said that they were happy and relieved because the war was finally over and because, many added, *"There would be an end to discrimination."* Mayan opposition to human rights did exist, but it was not a complete dismissal, based in a fear that this would "bring back the army," but rather a concern that overzealous application of human rights in criminal cases would let criminals go free and leave the population vulnerable to common crime, which has become an increasingly scourge in Mayan villages in recent years. I even heard of cases where thieves were stealing *masa* from women on their way home from village mill.

This rethinking of the guerrilla movement was expressed to me succinctly by an evangelical man a former village leader of the civil patrols who was steadfastly opposed to the guerrilla in the 1980s, and whose father he believed had been killed for criticizing them. He stopped short of saying that the guerrilla themselves were good, but he did feel strongly that the effect that they had had on the country was positive. He said, *"Today we can see that the guerrilla did something good. Everything is backward. Today things are better for indigenous people. There is space for us. Before there was a lot of discrimination. Now there is more respect."* I was surprised to hear him say this, especially given his past. But he was not the only person to express this view. While most people do not see the guerrilla movement or revolutionary ideology as a viable political position in the present, and do not necessarily declare their support of the movement, there is a growing appreciation of the gains for indigenous people that their efforts made. Many expressed the opinion that the guerrilla movement made Ladinos have more respect for indigenous, even if it was for fear of what might happen to them. This was not lost on Mayan residents, most of whom, even after the defeat of the

guerrilla, would never go back to the "way things were before" in their relations with Ladinos.

More evidence of the significance of recent political events in creating new understandings is provided by the change in expressed attitudes among Ladinos. Ladino leaders from the *casco urbano*, once opposed to human rights and democracy, now claim these discourses. When I interviewed the head of the civil patrols in the township, he was quick to defensively insist that:

> There were no abuses of human rights among the civil patrollers in San Pedro. Here they were all voluntary. People wanted to patrol. Here the patrols did development projects, roads in the communities and bridges and trained people to read. We did good works. Only the literacy classes were obligatory.

When I commented to a community member that the ex-head of the patrols claimed they were voluntary, he scoffed "*Donde!"*(where) and began to recount the various abuses of the civil patrols. Many told me that during the war, Laparra was outspoken in his condemnation of human rights and democracy. This is consistent with Hale's (2006) argument about the shifting racial ideologies among Ladinos. Ladinos embrace anti-racist ideology, but continue to think of themselves as superior to Mayans, and fight to maintain their class and racial privileges. In San Pedro, it seemed that many Ladinos espoused a color-blind ideology for the benefit of my ears, while holding very distinct feelings privately. It appeared that they were appropriating anti-racism to appear modern. This is ironic in that their claim to superiority to Mayans is now based on the Ladino monopoly on modern status.

Some individuals who are not participants in the URNG, including those who had vehemently denied guerrilla activities previously, later, after having developed a level of respect for me, and a feeling of comfort, admitted, privately, and often proudly, their participation in the guerrilla movement. It might be that little of this has made it to the

public sphere for reasons presented in this chapter. It is possible, however, that as people from a variety of political positions come to understand the stakes of the guerrilla movement, despite the devastation that followed the period of social mobilization, there will be more open discussions of the past. Several conversations made me hopeful that a less military-determined understanding of Mayan agency in the political processes of the 1970s might come to pass in San Pedro, and possibly in many other towns like it.

One interview with a Mayan man, Victoriano, who was former head of a village development committee, illustrated this point. Victoriano had actively participated in politics, never as a candidate, but in village-level organizing parties he was allied with. Our interview was not specifically about his participation, but about his memory of past events. In response to my question about why there was a war, without hesitation, he answered:

> Because there was organization. Maybe not only indigenous folks but also Ladinos were involved in that. There was a lot of corruption. We were very marginalized. They would not attend to the rural people [in the aldeas], only in the town. That's where the people started to organize themselves.

This statement reiterates the way that Mayans saw the revolution as an extension of their struggles against racial marginalization. It also emphasizes the intercultural character of the revolution. I then asked him if he thought the massacres, used by the army, were justified. This was his response:

> With those massacres…the government did not want indigenous people to rise up, to ask for what they wanted. That's why they sent the army to terminate all of that. But they still were not able. Because the majority of the people were already organized. The massacres were very hard. There were a lot of people, many of them who were prepared to help the guerrilla, but when the massacres came they didn't go with one side or the other. The people stayed like that, neutral. If you help the guerrilla, the army will massacre [people]. If you help the army, there goes the guerrilla to do damage to that person. So we had a time when we were not with either side because there was a sword in front and behind. That's how we stayed. That's right.

In this narrative, the majority of the Mayan villagers were with the guerrilla. The guerrilla movement was viewed as a rising up of indigenous power. This changed when it became obvious that the army came to kill. Villagers then stayed neutral. This was a difficult space because each group was adamant that the villagers take sides; but it was the safest alternative. Villagers were now really between two armies. Victoriano is critical of guerrilla tactics after the violence, which he sees as very insensitive to the fear of the people, for whom the consequences were now all too clear and much too high. Still, his criticism of the guerrilla does not cause him to blame the guerrilla for the massacres themselves, shifting local enthusiasm onto them for the violence. Nor does it cause him to re-think local support for guerrilla objectives. In this narrative, the two armies was a reality, but it was only a reality after the political situation was radically transformed by violence. It is doubtful that this narrative is VIctoriano's alone. It was probably one that informed the later thinking of the Mayan political movement led by Antulio Morales, as Victoriano was a close associate of Antulio's, and a self-described follower of his political movement.

CONCLUSION: THE POSSIBILITIES AND DANGERS COUNTER MEMORIES

The two armies discourse was not entirely created by the army, even if it was official army discourse. The two armies narrative was the Mayan act of resistance *par excellance*. The army had to shift its official discourse in response to meet local criticisms of the violence and to establish legitimacy among the traumatized population. It was based on real experiences. It would be foolish to dispute the fact that many of those killed during decades of counter-insurgency violence were indeed innocents. It may very well be that many of the indigenous leaders in San Pedro were unfairly

denounced to the military by town Ladinos anxious about the very real possibility of losing power in their town to the new organizations led by Mayan activists from the town, groups that had existed before the guerrilla movement. Moreover, the guerrillas made many errors and many Mayans dissented from their methods and goals. Mayan criticisms were never absent, and grew as the war went on. Most Mayans were especially critical of the decision to continue the war after state reprisals reached critical levels. After the initial period of support, most Mayans did feel caught between two armies. The two armies discourse was a real experience for the majority of Mayans during the war. But it seems unlikely it was their entire experience: it was a reduced, cut down, modified, version of their experience. It left out the crucial moment before the arrival of the army when the guerrilla was seen as the answer to Mayan desires for economic and racial justice. The army picked up on this popular sentiment, this resistance strategy, then re-packaged it for their own needs and expediencies for their postwar governing strategy. The efficacy of the "two armies" discourses lies precisely in its ability to draw on real experiences and ambivalences and then make these previously more marginal and less salient and determinative feelings central. But now state power operates through the legitimation of explicit Mayan partial criticisms of state violence.

The two armies discourse created a safe space for Mayans eager to avoid military reprisals, but with a high cost for community solidarity and for the autonomy of local interpretations of reality and history. Denial of leftist politics allowed criticisms of the military in dangerous times, and were crucial to the reconstitution of valorized subjectivities among war victims. But healing under imperfect conditions had additional costs: the breakdown of community relations and the loss of a more complicated understanding of the relationship between Mayan politics and revolutionary politics. Having once conceded that guerrillas are criminals and that no one participated in their

movement, now coming up with a political alternative that involves the hallmark revolutionary political demands. By conceding the military's definition of guerrillas as criminals, discourses of innocence impede public reflection on the more complicated relationship that appears to have existed between Sampedranos and the revolution. It allows for the formation of a resistant identity, but within a narrative framework that erases the hope for a better future and national political change, so prevalent in the recent past. This contributes to the contemporary conceptual separation of Mayan and revolutionary struggles, fulfilling state strategies that aim to divide and contain both movements.

The dominant conception of Mayan politics in San Pedro bears the mark of this conceptual separation. The two forms of politics are assumed to have nothing to do with one another. Problems with the guerrilla movement, and the fact of Mayan ambivalence has created a situation in which the fundamental assumption common to a wide array of political parties is that Mayan politics is and should be completely independent of leftist politics. Leftist criticisms are of a completely different set of concerns. There is a division between material issues, such as resources, and cultural issues, such as the sphere of cultural representations: traditional dances, clothing, *marimba* (a musical instrument), and language. The only place where this material concerns, and class concerns become linked to Mayan specific needs is the new politics of development. Here, a history of Mayan specific exclusion is used to justify the focus of development resources on communities at a far remove from the town center.

These public memories shape the contemporary field of political alternatives naturally associated with Mayan politics. One way it accomplishes this is through impeding inquiries that a new generation of Mayan leaders might make in regards to their own history. Instead of attempting to recover a revolutionary politics once made

impossible by violence, Sampedranos publicly follow the "two army" discourse, heroizing indigenous leaders' local politics of anti-discrimination while denying the existence of revolutionary desire. This is of no small consequence, because, as was the case in the 1970s, class politics remains a necessary component of any dream of substantial indigenous political advancement in the Guatemalan nation state. Today, all the discourses that explicitly link Mayan desires for well-being to a necessary change in national politics are marginalized in discussions of politics in San Pedro.

Perhaps it would be fitting to describe the "two army" discourse, and the denial of past revolutionary politics as a "weapon of the weak" (Scott 1985), as one strategy of avoiding reprisals and winning small victories employed by the relatively powerless. But these forms of resistance rarely occur under ideal conditions. Certain contradictions inherent in situations in multiple overlaying realities place people in situations that are literally impossible. This particular memory opens a space for agency at one level, but denies another form of agency. Alternatively, along with De Certeau's (1984), we can imagine small acts rebellion not as ultimately failures, always contained *within* the structure of power that they resist, but rather as pointing to the possibility of the transformation of a power structure. In this view, each act of resistance reiterates the possibility of a fundamental reorganization of the social structure.

Here the important thing to remember is that the state must respond to dominant Mayan memories. It attempts to align its activities and identity with what it presents as an image of Mayan popular will. But the state cannot decide how Mayans narrate the past: only Mayans can. This does not mean that the state will not try to continue to influence these memories, and can succeed for long periods of time, but they are always running a few steps behind Mayan consciousness. It will be interesting to see what

official response emerges when political common sense in Mayan villages shifts towards an acknowledgement of a more complicated political past.

The dominant construction treats the past as univocal. It does not admit that there are differences of opinion regarding the past. It assumes that the past is fixed, knowable. I want to replace this with a different version of the truth, one that does not simply happen, but that we consciously construct in the present. I want this chapter to be a gesture towards the possibility of thinking otherwise about the past. It is a history that tries to instill an attention towards the multiple possibilities from the present. It wants to show that the past could have been done differently and therefore could still be re-organized and rethought. Truth is not simply out there to be found. Different facts need to be woven into a narrative. These frames allow us to see the past in different ways, in particular stories. Stories about history matter a great deal; these are the base material that all of us use to shape our identities, to locate ourselves in relationship to others in the world and to make sense out of our lives. This process is always partial, but does not gain its importance from its transparent access to the truth, but from the inevitable role of power in construction of narratives of the past, and their relevance for our ethics today. I believe that understanding how the conflict occurred, especially the forms of agency that shaped the local articulation of the violence, is important to the processes of national reconstruction in Guatemala. There might exist other ways to form a progressive collective politics in Mayan communities. It is not a question of *whether* to adopt a perspective on the past, but a question of *which* perspective will come to dominate in the reconstruction of a new society in the wake of conflict. Understanding the way that local past opens space for dialogue about accountability among local actors regarding their roles in the violence. It is a form of taking responsibility and the only way to re-establish

the bounds of trust and community that must exist for a political culture to aspire towards democracy.

NOTES

[1] In all of the reports of state propaganda, no one has mentioned that the state did not include a criticism of guerrilla racism in their smear campaign against the guerrilla.

[2] Stoll's penchant for a sensationalist, 'expose' approach to anthropology, and his contrarian analysis has been very effective in grabbing headlines and, unfortunately, shaping public debate about Guatemala, in Guatemala and internationally. His narrative has been instrumental in the dismissal of the moral force of criticisms of military violence tout court by way of focusing on inconsistencies in one story. As Sanford (2003) notes, and hers and the work of many other scholars demonstrates, his own work does not stand up to the close scrutiny he applies to Menchu.

[3] On the one hand, Sanford professes to take no position on whether or not people from Acul supported the guerrilla. On the next page, however, she professes their innocence, asking: "When and how did it come to pass that Ixiles felt drained, and, later, used and/or abused by army and guerrilla demands for 'hospitality'."

Chapter Three: ¡Que se Vaya MOSCAMED! Revolutionary Pessimism and the Limits of Democracy

If, as I argued in the last chapter, most politically active Mayans today tend to deny, or know little about, Mayan participation in the revolutionary movement, and distinguish Mayan politics from the political aspirations of the revolutionary left, one might think that their commonsense understandings and deeply embedded and shared political narratives would reflect these tendencies. That is, that they would manifest a transformation of Mayan political consciousness from earlier times. One might assume that the moral repudiation of the guerrilla movement—so commonly voiced in public discussions of the guerrilla—would find correlates in everyday talk, shared conceptual frameworks and affective dispositions, and popular cultural references. But instead there was disjuncture. I found something very different during my time in San Pedro, and in other towns in Huehuetenango. In fact, I discovered that most Mayan-identified Huehuetecos—regardless of past or present political affiliation—share a deep, taken for granted investment in Marxist narratives and commonsense, creatively combined with anti-racist, and, increasingly, Mayan nationalist sensibilities. Interviews and conversations with politically active *Sampedranos* of all stripes—including those who previously sympathized with or even actively participated in leftist movements, and who have since the Peace Accords affiliated themselves with right wing parties—reveal that they generally still endorse the political goals of the left.

My fieldnotes are filled with examples of Mayan political and community leaders from all political affiliations who would espouse beliefs that echoed the discourses of the revolutionary movement. They frequently bemoaned that the country is run by a small

group of "*ricos*," and corrupt businessmen who keep poor Mayans *"under their boots."* Another example happened one day as I was sharing a Gallo *cerveza* with a few male members of a family who ardently supported the *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG) in the recent elections, but who had just as ardently supported the guerrilla in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As we swapped stories, they instructed me to peel the label off of the beer. I asked why, and one explained that, *"it gives a chance to the poor people."* Beyond such small rituals of class solidarity, in San Pedro there is widespread support for the Peace Accords, most[1] conceptions of human rights, democracy, and even standard revolutionary goals like land reform. And, as was obvious in the last chapter on memory, Sampedranos have been highly critical of military violence. The strong sense that payment in compensation for participation in the civil patrols was justified stemmed not only from the still painful memories of patrol duty, but the sense that the patrols were obligatory. Moreover, these standard reformist, anti-army, and at times outwardly Marxist, sentiments were frequently refracted through the anti-racist idea that Mayans are poor *because they are indigenous*. These elements of Mayan political culture today are continuous with the political imaginary that led many Sampedrano Mayans to support revolutionary forces in the late 1970s. What are we to make of this disjuncture? What does this mean about widespread participation in neo-authoritarian parties? Can this be explained simply by reference to their populist discourses?

This chapter further explores this breach between espoused political affiliation and deeply held worldviews by way of examining a "Mayan" conspiracy theory about MOSCAMED—the US Department of Agriculture's institution in charge of eradicating the Mediterranean fruit fly and preventing its spread to the US, working in cooperation with the Mexican and Guatemalan governments. By examining the appeal of the MOSCAMED conspiracy and comparing it to data gained through interviews and

participant observation in San Pedro, I revise current understandings of Mayan neo-authoritarianism.

The MOSCAMED conspiracy is a tale of political corruption and exploitation that holds the status of truth for an overwhelming majority of rural Mayans—regardless of party affiliation—in Huehuetenango, an indigenous-majority department in the northern part of Guatemala's western highlands. Much to the dismay of MOSCAMED's employees, most Mayan smallholding farmers hate MOSCAMED. They reject their fly control activities and also hold the program responsible for a good measure of their contemporary agricultural misfortune. They contend that there is a sinister, true purpose hidden behind the MOSCAMED's official image. With much venom and sadness, these farmers insist that MOSCAMED has for decades purposefully unleashed a variety of new pests into their fields, obligating them to buy chemical pesticides. Mayans in this region view MOSCAMED as a cleverly disguised front operation for agribusinesses and their government cronies. For them, the MOSCAMED conspiracy symbolizes the tragic plight of the rural farmer, the hapless victim of pernicious forces outside of their control. By using the term conspiracy, I do not mean to imply that it is necessarily false—definitive evidence is lacking—only that it posits behind the scenes decision-making (West and Sanders 2003).[2]

MOSCAMED, obviously, rejects the conspiracy, as do nearly all non-Mayan Ladinos in Huehuetenango. Despite pressure to accept alternative explanations, most Mayans believe the conspiracy. Why? Rather than embracing the exclusive truth claims of dominant interpretations and their assumptions of Mayan ignorance, I view the MOSCAMED conspiracy as a culturally constituted interpretive strategy and embodied expressive practice through which many Mayans imagine and experience the agrarian crisis, the state, and their own political agency. It bears mention that rumors about

MOSCAMED's dirty secret formed in the wake of genocidal violence and militarization. It is a post-revolutionary conspiracy.

I examine the conspiracy's appeal by comparing it to the discourses circulated by MOSCAMED in its own self-defense and then to agronomists' explanations for the decline in rural agriculture. After reviewing anthropological perspectives on how to read conspiracy politically, I compare the plots, symbolism, and emotions normalized in the MOSCAMED conspiracy to those of the revolutionary imaginary of the late 1970s. Finally, I compare these results to data collective through interviews with Mayans who participate in neo-authoritarian parties. This analysis suggests a perverse reconfiguration of the Mayan revolutionary imaginary. Most Mayans share revolutionary desires and emotions and revolutionary commonsense. Instead of prescribing revolutionary or reformist action, however, blaming and hating MOSCAMED articulates the correct meanings of conspiracy and victimhood to the appropriate emotional responses of anger, frustration and cynicism. This provides crucial insight into widespread Mayan political alignment with neo-authoritarian politics, which goes far beyond these parties' adoption of populist rhetoric. Why do so many Mayans think and feel 'left' but vote 'right'? I contend that the understandings and feelings embedded within the conspiracy index the continued effects of state violence on many Mayan's conceptions and experiences of the state, on their sense of collective agency, and, therefore, on the viability of emerging political spaces. The same perceptions and emotions that shape the conspiracy also inform local political commonsense and political affect, forming what I call 'revolutionary pessimism'. This indicates the limits of Guatemalan democracy. Revolutionary pessimism constitutes a crucial relay in maintaining neo-authoritarian and neoliberal regimes of power, each of which must, still, disfigure the political participation of rural Mayans in order to guarantee their reproduction.

MAYAN HATRED OF MOSCAMED

MOSCAMED began work in 1975 in the northern border departments of Huehuetenango and the Petén in Guatemala, and in Chiapas, Mexico. Since their arrival, MOSCAMED carried out strange and unpleasant activities that were quite visible, and quite annoying, to rural Mayans. Mayans saw planes flying over villages and the surrounding cropland spraying pesticides and herbicides, in many cases directly on their crops and homes. They saw agents place traps in villager's cornfields. MOSCAMED also set up quarantine posts along the major highways, stopping buses and searching and seizing untreated and thus potentially contaminated fruit. Worst of all were the sprays. Spraying did not happen everywhere, but word soon spread of how awful it was. Children exposed to sprays would often begin to cough or vomit. Beehives would wither and die. And the pesticide damaged various crops, sometimes killing them. In addition to being harmful, the sprays smelled terribly. MOSCAMED does not solicit local opinion on their activities, but instead deals directly with the Guatemalan government, who officially endorses the program.

I first heard the suspicious rumors about MOSCAMED on my first trip to work in a cornfield. My friend, a middle class Mayan farmer in his early 60s, told me how, *"MOSCAMED's planes flew over the fields, throwing worms everywhere […] Now I have to put* veneno *(poison) in my* milpa*."* He instructed me to carefully place three granules of the white, strong smelling poison into each shoot of the young corn plant. *"If I don't use poison,"* he explained, *"the worm eats the roots and the corn falls over."* Two years later when I went to do fieldwork on agrarian modernization programs I heard the MOSCAMED story repeatedly. A high school educated young man explained his conviction to me, saying, *"I know that people think that it is wrong; but I know it is true.*

One time I saw one of their [MOSCAMED's] bags lying open in a field; it was full of snakes." His sad expression, lowered shoulders and serious eyes urged me to believe him. MOSCAMED's arrival coincided with the arrival of new types of agricultural pests. Over time, several eyewitness reports surfaced blaming MOSCAMED for bringing them. Eventually the truth of these accounts gained widespread acceptance among Mayan farmers. As I began fieldwork in other rural towns, I found that the rumor was something agreed upon by the vast majority of Mayans, even most who had been educated. A young farmer explained to me this commonly held knowledge:

> These rats [now] are not like the ones before. Those were larger, slower—not like these. These ones can walk upside down, or straight up a wall. I saw them once in the coast [coffee plantation], now they are here. They brought them here to make us buy poison.

The accusations start with infestations of agricultural pests, but do not stop there. Although the MOSCAMED story focuses on the spread of pestilence to sell pesticides, MOSCAMED's obvious mis-dealings are read as evidence of the existence of a dense nexus of power and profit in which spreading pests and then peddling the cure is simply one scam among many. One farmer told me how *"Fertilizers used to work well, but now they are expensive and they don't do anything. I think that they make them weaker."* Farmers also blame chemical companies for the hikes in prices. Another told me that now, *"One quintal (100 lb bag) of fertilizer already costs nearly 150* quetzales *(about US $13), and every year it goes up. We need the fertilizers, so they keep raising the price."* Most farmers also think that pesticide and herbicide producers dilute their products. "*El gramoxone"* (paraquat), the most commonly used chemical herbicide, *"used to leave only black soil afterwards. Now it barely kills the weeds. They grow taller and stronger every year. We have to use more and it works just a little."* Pesticides are also more expensive, and are often ineffective against new pests. Another aspect of the conspiracy

holds that seizing fruit is a ploy to benefit the large fruit interests. The people transporting fruit on public buses are small farmers, on their way to sell in local markets. Confiscating their wares seems like a double standard, too, because, as far as they know, this never happens to the large fruit ranches. This leads some to conclude that absconding with produce raised by small farmers helps large plantations monopolize the domestic market. It is obvious to proponents of this discourse that the government is involved, benefiting from it if not running it, and at the very least turning a blind eye.

The overwhelming majority of rural Mayans I spoke with in Huehuetenango believe strongly in the conspiracy, which is most commonly retold by male farmers and circulates in an almost unchanged form throughout the region. Most who believe the conspiracy are fully aware of the other explanations, and encounter frequent pressure to accept them. Rural Ladinos by and large find the conspiracy laughable; they see it as another example of native superstition. These divergent perspectives often lead to verbal confrontations between exasperated Ladinos and unconvinced Mayans. Not all Mayans subscribe the conspiracy. Some even work for MOSCAMED. Non-believing Mayans tend to be more formally educated, and sometimes mock the gullibility of believers. But many who believe are high school and even college educated. At least one Mayan who works for MOSCAMED claimed to do so primarily as a way to travel to other villages and warn them about the consequences of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The same friend who told me about him also recounted a story about a development council meeting where a young Mayan man working for MOSCAMED confronted the village representatives, admonishing them to get over their unjustified fears about MOSCAMED. He was interrupted by an older farmer from a remote village who told him that he was, *"very young to be talking like that,"* adding that he was, *"like a* Ladino *taking the side of the rich against the indigenous."* [3]

The conspiracy is knotted up with strong feelings. Farmers are furious with MOSCAMED. When program agents arrived to answer criticisms in the township of San Juan, one villager, speaking for the group, said angrily, *"We are* sick *of MOSCAMED! We don't want to know anything* about *MOSCAMED! Get out MOSCAMED! Que se vaya MOSCAMED!"* Alongside this anger is an ample dose of frustration and desperation. In the primary contexts of its retelling—among community members, between community members and outsiders like me—the MOSCAMED conspiracy is a sad and serious story about how large corporations defraud defenseless farmers with governmental support, and the daily sense of insecurity that this creates. Recounting the story typically leads to an awkward silence in which it seemed the teller had left me to ponder the staggering injustice of their lives. I always felt at least a little uncomfortable, because there was little to do or say. Almost inevitably, talk about MOSCAMED's secret mission creates a solemn occasion for reflection on pervasive economic hardships caused by the collapse of subsistence farming, the life support of rural communities, a lifestyle made increasingly untenable by the shortage in land, the rising cost and decreased effectiveness of chemical inputs, and the drop in coffee prices. MOSCAMED's activities are understood as a central part of a process that has made their economic lives increasingly precarious.

MOSCAMED'S OFFICIAL POSTURE

Of all the governmental programs in Guatemala, MOSCAMED is the least popular among rural Mayans. It is also the most embattled. Retaliation against it has taken various forms. Last July, dozens of farmers armed with rocks, shovels and machetes burned a MOSCAMED control post in the Petén—for the second time.[4] Many

farmers proudly recounted to me stories of people from nearby townships who had shot down several of MOSCAMED's crop dusting planes.[5] Several environmentalist and human rights NGOs have produced documents criticizing the program (Tropico Verde 2004). Recently, a group of 40 border zone townships in Chiapas, Mexico and in Huehuetenango formed an organization to oppose MOSCAMED (Soto 2005).

Indefatigable, MOSCAMED wages public relations warfare, tenaciously insisting that it simply and safely combats the fly and that it has never introduced any kind of pest into the environment. Program officials boast that their medfly control efforts are safe, getting safer and economically crucial not only for US farmers, but also for Guatemalans who want to export to the United States. MOSCAMED points to their "integrated control method," which combines sterile release, cultural controls, and pesticides, including, until at least 2001, a malathion-poisoned bait (USDA-APHIS 1996). Previously, they defended malathion use, saying the health effects were negligible if administered correctly and in small concentrations. Recently, MOSCAMED has emphasized non-malathion techniques—particularly the release of sterilized medflies and new and safer pesticides (USDA-APHIS 2001).

But MOSCAMED's defense is obfuscatory. Previously, MOSCAMED admitted to side effects of malathion for plants and certain bee species, but claimed that there were no health effects on humans. The US Center for Disease Control, however, cites serious health risks, and recommends taking extensive precautions to avoid contamination, including that people not enter fields sprayed with malathion for twelve hours after a spraying, and six days if they are going to work (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease 2003). MOSCAMED was notoriously noncompliant with these safety standards. For over twenty years, MOSCAMED sprayed malathion almost indiscriminately, in many cases directly on people's homes, which, in rural villages are often located within

sprayed fields, and without informing the inhabitants of the safety risks or necessary precautions. Although they publicly claim to no longer use malathion, nowhere in their official publications does MOSCAMED indicate when, and how much the new techniques or insecticides have replaced the chemical (USAID-APHIS 1996).[6] And, if new chemicals truly offer risk free alternatives to malathion, why is malathion still used in the US and in Mexico (by MOSCAMED) for fruitfly control?[7] Although MOSCAMED shifts the blame, Mayan farmers continue to complain about sicknesses caused by sprays, whatever they may contain (USDA-APHIS 2002).[8] Regardless, MOSCAMED calculates that some negative health and environmental consequences are acceptable because of the potential repercussions for the US fruit industry, which would lose a projected $1.5 billion annually if the medfly became established in the US (USDA-APHIS 2002).

Their position on malathion aside, the claim that farmers receive economic benefits from the program seems only to apply to large farmers who can afford to treat their crops, and thus export them, while small farmers cannot, and often have their fruit confiscated when they try to transport it to regional markets. It seems likely that small producers would be able to export more fruit if the US ended the MOSCAMED program and lifted import restrictions on untreated fruit—both of which (with the program costing $35 million in tax dollars annually) create an artificial competitive advantage for US fruit producers. It seems reasonable to call for an independent study of the long-term health, economic, and environmental effects of MOSCAMED's current and past medfly control practices on rural Mayan farmers, as well as of their safety procedures. So does the idea of a popular referendum on their program, following the mandate of International Labor Organization Treaty 169, which recognizes the right of indigenous populations to be

consulted regarding activities that affect the environment. MOSCAMED officials staunchly oppose both of these measures.[9]

EXPERT DISCOURSES ON THE AGRARIAN CRISIS

The dominant explanation for the crisis in rural agriculture comes from agrarian and development experts. Agronomists include both Ladinos and Mayans, who are most often male and middle class. They describe the current problems as the combined effect of unsustainable farming practices combined with green revolution technologies gone miserably awry. This explanation focuses on the history of land use, population growth, and the introduction of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.[10] In the early days there was plenty of land, and that farmers used slash and burn techniques. After a few years, farmers would simply switch plots, letting the first one recuperate. When there were enough people to fill all the land, farmers could no longer leave land fallow long enough for it to regain its nutrients. As the land slowly lost its strength to intensive cropping, the population rose, and the confluence of these factors led to food shortages in the dry summer months (Falla 1972). These experts also point out that un-terraced land on steep inclines—common in the highlands—is more likely to lose soil nutrients during the hard downpours of the rainy season.

In what is now a frequent refrain, agronomists describe the diminishing effectiveness of the new agricultural inputs. They especially oppose the substitution of chemical for organic fertilizers. Over time, they explain, as farmers used chemicals exclusively, the soil lost micro-elements necessary for plant growth. Herbicides, they note, also substituted for hoeing nitrogen rich weeds into the soil. They also fault individual farmers for not diversifying their crops, or using organic methods, and for

continuing counterproductive "traditional" practices, such as burning their fields before planting, which removes more nutrients from the soil. New pests are understood to be a result of adaptive resistance to pesticides, or an effect of the depletion of soil nutrients (cfa Morales and Perfecto 2000). If mentioned at all, agronomists attribute the steady increase in the price of inputs to economic laws of supply and demand. In this perspective, population growth caused land shortage that created the food security problems that required the introduction of new technologies, whose long-term effects were unknown. Agricultural changes required new adjustments, which the farmers, for whatever reason (usually assumed to be cultural), refuse to make. Never do agronomists mention accusations of MOSCAMED, or of any sabotage. Agronomists often present this explanation as an alternative to the conspiracy.

RUMOR, CONSPIRACY AND POLITICAL IMAGINARIES

Anthropologists treat conspiracy theories as culturally constructed expressive practices used to process concerns and anxieties. Many read the proliferation of conspiracy, political rumor and the transformation of supernatural belief in postcolonial societies as responses to contradictions of capitalist globalization and neo-colonial victimization (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Masquelier 2000, 2001; Weiss 1996; Hoskins 2002; White 1993, 1997). Among the most common recurring themes and images in rumors and conspiracies in postcolonial societies are of vampiric, murderous and cannibalistic states and the victimized bodies of their citizens (Gescheire 1993, Shaw 1993, Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, White 1993, 1997, Masquelier 2001, Weiss 1996, Kroeger 2003, Butt 2005). Butt observes that "In almost all cases [ ] the assaulted,

dismembered, or decapitated human body comes to stand for the inchoate forces that threaten the wider body politic" (417).

Stories of cannibalism, AIDS infection, suckers of human blood and fat, beheadings, demonic technologies—these potent and suggestive symbols, anthropologists argue, are typically seen as condensed expressions of local worldviews, commentaries on victimization and expressions of powerlessness, cynicism and mystification (Silverstein 2003). Recent work sees these theories as evidence of local agency, in the form of the ability to see through complex power relations (Butt 2005). However, this perspective would have difficulty explaining the circulation of the MOSCAMED conspiracy, in which suspicion coexists with political support for neo-authoritarian regimes. Regardless of whether they confirm or deny agency to their adherents, or see rumors and conspiracies as either true or false, most political readings of conspiracy and rumor reduce questions of politics and political agency to ideology or discourse. Such conceptions miss the fact that the body, and not just the mind, has been the target of power—attempts to limit and regulate and invest its conduct (Foucault 1979). Several investigations examine rumor, conspiracy and supernatural belief systems for traces of the intertwined shifts of the affective as well as conceptual landscape generated at particular historical moments in relation to regimes of power (Kroeger 2003, Stewart and Harding 2003, Sigel 2006). In this essay I show that analysis of conspiracy along these lines can complement other ethnographic and historiographic methods deepen existing understandings of national political movements.

GUATEMALAN POLITICAL CULTURE: GROUNDS FOR SUSPICION

Rural Mayans have many reasons to suspect and mistrust collusions between the Guatemalan state and big business. Guatemalan Mayans' historical experience of

victimization is exceptional. As in most Latin American countries, independence gave way to the internal colonization of indigenous groups, processes intensified by the creation of modern capitalist economies in the 19th century. In addition to forced labor, low wages, and inhuman living conditions that led to sickness, Mayan and poor Ladino laborers were regularly subjected to pesticide intoxication on large plantations (Melville and Melville 1971, 195-5; 262-3).[11] Today most Mayans live in poverty or extreme poverty, and are regularly subjected to humiliating discrimination. The twentieth century promised change, but brought more devastation. Optimism among many Mayans for the revolutionary movement was crushed when the now-infamous genocidal scorched earth campaign and subsequent militarization made death, fear and insecurity nearly inevitable facts of their daily lives. Economic devastation that followed compounded the effects of the counterinsurgency, as have the privatization of state services, inflation, and the collapse of the world coffee market. Postwar Guatemalan governments promise reform, but ignore the Accords, protect war criminals, fund death squads, and indulge in corruption while the rural sector plunges into chaos. While poverty and crime have increased, the government takes little action to help, as was evidenced by the government's completely ineffective response to Hurricane Stan.[12]

This nauseating mix of exploitation, marginalization, and humiliation parallels a growing turmoil in Mayan communities. Thousands must migrate northward to find work. Violent crime is commonplace and witchcraft accusations are on the rise, as is mob justice for suspected witches and thieves. Increases in alcoholism and a rash of farmer suicides index a rise in individual suffering. In this context, it is understandable that rural Mayan farmers feel vulnerable and seek reasonable explanations for the agrarian crisis.

Additionally, the questions left unanswered by MOSCAMED's confusing and contradictory activities raise more doubts. Why did new worms arrive not long after

MOSCAMED planes began to fly over their fields? Why are the children getting sick and why are plants dying if MOSCAMED's sprays are safe? That these are simply coincidences is unbelievable. MOSCAMED's record of dissimulation further fuels Mayan distrust. The agronomists' discourse provides a compelling explanation for the mechanics of the crisis, but does not satisfy the concerns expressed by the conspiracy. Can it really just be bad luck that every chemical input works less than it was supposed to and now costs up to twenty times as much as it did when it was first introduced?

Establishing the reasonability of distrust, however, does not explain the specific elements of the MOSCAMED conspiracy. First, the conspiracy is rife with highly suggestive images: disgusting worms, dead crops and livestock, children's wasted bodies, airplanes flying overhead, executing schemes hatched in secret back room deals between elites, executing a highly sophisticated scheme with state-of-the-art technology. Mayans are figured as victims "in the know," fully aware, yet simply, frustratingly, unable to end the assault. Second, examining the questions the MOSCAMED conspiracy explicitly and implicitly puts to the other explanations brings to light a consistent set of interpretive preoccupations. MOSCAMED does not explain the agrarian decline, but simply claims to have nothing to do with it. The agronomists' explanation only tells *how* the science behind the process works. Their skepticism clarifies what many Mayans feel strongly is missing in the other explanations: an accounting for the occulted activities of big corporations and the state as well as the human motivations that have made the agrarian crisis possible. Mayans see selfish motives at the root of the crisis. They want to know who is responsible and who benefits. Finding these motivations organizes and makes sense of their experiences in a convincing way, telling *why* things are the way that they are.

The conspiracy fills in what Mayans see as blank spaces in the other versions. Mayans I spoke with do not necessarily or completely reject the other explanations; rather they oppose to them to the extent that they attempt to substitute for the recognition of underhanded profit motives. Third, the conspiracy prescribes a very different type of emotional response than the competing explanations. Where MOSCAMED's public relations campaign prescribes calm, trust, and acceptance, the conspiracy incites worry, fear of violation, and anger.

The interpretive maneuvers and emotional tone of the MOSCAMED conspiracy reproduce key elements of the revolutionary imaginary—the most powerful and explosive conceptual frame through which many rural Mayans interpreted their political reality and formulated revolutionary political identities over the past six decades. This association seems warranted due to striking similarities in content between the two discourses and the emotions that they prescribe. First, they share similar plot structures, characters, themes and symbols. They also both normalize certain understandings of the possibilities inherent in Mayans in conflict with state power. Furthermore, both enact and prescribe similar affective responses and types of feelings in conjunction with these encounters. These similarities, and the fact that MOSCAMED emerged in the post-revolutionary, post-genocidal moment make conspiracy an ideal vantage point from which to evaluate changes in Mayan political common sense over the last several decades. This line of argument raises an obvious question: if the MOSCAMED rumor reveals that Mayans are still invested in revolutionary commonsense and desire, why do so many now support neo-authoritarian regimes at the very moment when their political opinions and actions seem—at least when viewed from the outside—to make a difference?

As described in the first chapter, by late 1980, revolutionary dreams had captivated many highland Mayans. Thousands of communities formed alliances with the guerrilla; plantation-owning Ladinos feared for their lives; newspapers and other means of communication were temporarily hijacked and filled with revolutionary manifestos; guerrilla factions were at odds over who would lead the country after the victory. The government's days seemed numbered. Right at that moment, the army descended on the countryside, engulfing it in violence.

During the war, massive state violence dramatically symbolized the state's ability and willingness to destroy the bodies, lives and communities of hundreds of thousands of rural Guatemalans—mostly Mayans. The creation of unprecedented surveillance structures maximized the effects of ultra-violent public spectacles of torture and indiscriminate mass-murder, bringing the threat of this brand of barbarity directly into the most intimate spaces of family and community. The establishment of military barracks in each town and the creation of the civil patrol—which forced every adult male in rural communities to patrol for the guerrilla or be killed themselves by the army for abetting subversives—turned Guatemala into a large prison, one where the guards were also the prisoners, drawing the civilian population deeper into the conflict (Smith 1990). It soon became universally known among the population that the state was more than willing and capable of killing everyone. Retribution was an undeniable certainty. By demonstrating their power, the violence and separated the guerrilla from their village bases. *La violencia* created a deep sense of powerlessness and overwhelming despair, convincing the population that political alternatives were impossible (REHMI 1998, CEH 1999). Words inadequately hint at the suffering and misery that this strategy created. The aim of state violence was to convince people that their resistance was futile, to make them accept the constant suffering and humiliation of every day life in poverty and social

exclusion, a daily torture that is the flipside of the dominant social order of racial and class privilege. From this perspective, *la violencia* was a resounding success.

There is a need to think through the role of violence in Guatemalan political culture, and in shaping rural Mayan politics specifically, outside the frame of the "culture of terror" hypothesis. Although this is a vital corrective to conservative discourses that ignore the role of violence in society, it leaves Mayans in the victim role and does not acknowledge substantial, if limited, changes in Guatemalan political culture since the Peace Accords. This nuanced analysis is necessary if these criticisms of Guatemalan democracy wish to be taken seriously in public debates about Guatemala. Understanding contemporary Mayan political identities requires examining how current selective violence against social movements in the context of general impunity to affect a political imaginary that was interrupted by counterinsurgent repression, and how this nexus shapes evolving Mayan perceptions of and feelings about the possibilities for efficacious political agency in Guatemala's newly opened democratic spaces.

In what follows, I analyze the symbolic content of and emotional investments in the MOSCAMED conspiracy and situate it alongside other ethnographic data as a way of read transformations in the commonsense understandings, narratives and related emotional states central to Mayan political subjectivity in Huehuetenango. I pay particular attention to the manner in which Mayans imagine and feel the state and their own political agency.

REVOLUTIONARY PESSIMISM

Analyzing shifts in political subjectivity requires careful attention to the ways in which widely held state fantasies arising from particular patterns of state activity re-work crucial narratives of political identity and affective dispositions surrounding politics,

crucial in the sense that these delineate—at least temporarily—the politically possible. As Aretxaga (2000) explains, understanding the politics of imagining the state requires more than pointing to a particular imaginary, but showing "how the state as a phantasmatic reality operates within a political imaginary to constitute political reality and political experience and to produce concrete effects. Aretxaga emphasizes that states exist, "through a world of fantasy thoroughly narrativized and imbued with affect, fear, and desire, that make it, in fact, a plausible reality" (52).

I argue that the MOSCAMED conspiracy indexes how past and present forms of state violence have shaped Mayan conceptions and feelings about the meaning of democracy. It embodies Mayan understandings of social power—in this case the nexus of capitalism and the state—as well as their estimates of their ability to act politically in relationship to these imagined entities. However, central differences distinguish the MOSCAMED conspiracy theory from the revolutionary narrative. Much like the revolutionary narrative, the MOSCAMED conspiracy expresses a deep-seated distrust for the state and for the rich, a mistrust that seems to be shared by a great majority of Mayans in the region. It caricatures them as self-interested liars, without scruples or limitations on their ability or willingness to sacrifice poor Mayans to increase their wealth. Significantly, Mayans appear in the conspiracy as an oppressed collectivity, recognizable by a shared victim status. For Mayans, political economic injustice is inseparable from racial injustice. However, instead of positing injustice as an impetus for a reversal of power relations through confronting powerful companies or the state, as is done in the revolutionary narrative, the MOSCAMED conspiracy does not discuss alternatives. Of central importance is the power attributed to the state and to popular movements in each narrative, as well as the affective dispositions that they articulate. The state, and the social order it maintains, is imagined as an all encompassing and insuperable force,

always ready to step in and humiliate social movements and their participants—the people. The subject position of the enraged and rebellious "insurgent" is replaced with the subject position of "victim," who is also enraged, but at the same time helpless, frustrated, and passive in relation to the powerful state.

Reading the MOSCAMED conspiracy as evidence of a pessimistic poetic helps make sense of somewhat contradictory ethnographic data. Oddly, interviews with and observations of politically active *Sampedranos* who previously sympathized with or even actively participated in leftist movements, and who have since the Peace Accords affiliated themselves with right wing parties, reveal that they generally still endorse the political goals of the left. When I asked community leaders what they think about agrarian reform, they all say that it is a good idea, *"But,"* one was quick to add, *"It can't be done. We tried for years. The* finqueros *are too strong."* I was surprised during my research at the number of times that political leaders on the right or non-politically involved community leaders would espouse revolutionary discourses, often bemoaning that the country is run by a small group of rich, and corrupt businessmen who keep Mayans *"under their boots."* At the same time as these revolutionary desires boil under the surface they are smothered under a heavy cloud of pessimism. A Mayan mayoral candidate for a right wing party in the 2003 elections explained his perspective on politics like this:

> They want to fix Guatemala, but with each attempt, it is sinking deeper. When a child is born, they already owe money to the United States. They are never going to be able to pay that debt. Have you heard of the Bishop Juan Gerardi? (pause) He published a book about the violence. We studied this in my class. It's called Nunca Mas [REHMI]. Never Again. What does that mean? It means that Guatemala is never, never, never going to change. The diputados (legislators) want to raise their salaries and what do they do? They don't do anything. And then they killed Gerardi, for being in favor of the poor. There's never a government that worries about the people. Here there's a hospital but there isn't any medicine. They prescribe [medicine] but you have to go buy it and there's no

> money. And there are many towns where there isn't even a hospital. Only the church helps with the hospital here. That's why the government in Guatemala is atrasado [backwards, behind].

Nunca mas means never again. The title *Nunca Mas* was originally intended to be a renunciation of *la violencia*, an unequivocal resolution to never permit what happened in Guatemala to happen again, in Guatemala or anywhere else. Hearing the intended meaning twisted by a Mayan who had taken a course on the subject into a definitive statement of the inevitability of oppressive government left me speechless. Although every Mayan I spoke to supported the Peace Accords, regardless of party affiliation, few of them thought the government had made any effort to comply with them. When I asked the same man what he thought about the Peace Accords, he was equally pessimistic. Peace, he said:

> Was just on paper with the signing of the government and the URNG. The armed conflict ended, but true peace… it doesn't exist. There's already violence, and other things, massacres after the Accords. There's still racism and a lot of gangs.

Another interview with a different community leader reiterated this sentiment when I asked him if he thought the government had upheld its side of the bargain in implementing the Peace Accords:

> A: Well, since the signing of the peace the government has not made good on them. They take almost a part and the majority of it they only maybe do 50%.
>
> Q: do you think they want to comply, but are unable or that they simply don't want to?
>
> A: In part it's how they are. What I mean is that everything is in their hands. If they want to, they do it. If they don't, well, they don't do it. They do whatever they want. Just like in the period [FRG regime] that just passed. Instead of working they were more corrupt. That is where they don't make good on the Peace Accords, very little.

Political power is in the hands of the powerful. They act on reforms at their whim. They do what they want. This pessimistic political outlook was best encapsulated in an interaction with a former guerrilla sympathizer, now an active supporter of the FRG:

> Q: Do you think that there are political parties that are in favor of the people?
>
> A: Yes, the party URNG. That's the guerrilla party.
>
> Q: Then why are you in a different party?
>
> A. I have always worked for the parties for the poor. But they never win. Even good guerrilla leaders change parties, it's always for personal interest.
>
> Q: So you were struggling before, but now you want to win?
>
> A: Look, I'm illiterate. Ever since my childhood I have never known regular pay. I worked from 7 am to 5pm for 40 centavos every day. Really suffering! When I got married, I worked for two months in the coast in a finca. In two months I barely saved 20 quetzales. I was malnourished, my shirt was ripped and my pants were ruined. That is the life of an indio, of a peasant. Now I am saving the money I make helping the party. If God gives me health, I can make money the entire four years.
>
> Q: What changes do you think would be necessary in the government of Guatemala?
>
> A: To change the government? That's difficult. He is in his power. Now there are a lot of organizations. Many go to protest in front of the president's house. But he, what pain does it give him? He is there in his power, just listening. He never makes good.
>
> Q: So, you don't think that changing the government is possible?
>
> A: It's impossible.

Again, power is in the hands of the few, rich people and rulers who oppose reform. These are not exceptional sentiments. Almost no one I met—including many party higher-ups—explained their support for right wing parties in terms of agreeing with their ideologies or their plans for national development. Instead, they cited concrete

immediate, often personal, benefits. In fact, most were quite critical of all these parties, including their own, with corruption being their primary concern. Even though people say they vote for projects, and see a great increase in projects since the signing of the Accords, most village leaders see the real number of projects as minimal. The man who provided a novel interpretation of *Nunca Mas* related a locally held truth about what happens to the money earmarked for projects: They have agreements between big businessmen and there, between a few people, they take advantage of the goods of the state. When I asked if he thought the projects that came from the state were sufficient, he said that:

> They are few. Really, the projects do benefit the population, but in the first place, what they do there, I realized that they change the budgets, with all the people that work in the institution. The money stays in the middle. For example, the asphalt here in San Pedro [on the road connecting the town to the highway], they've inaugurated the project twice but there still is no asphalt.

As for their feelings about the left, they do not unilaterally blame the *guerrilla* for failing and endangering them during the war, and do not view it as a fundamentally racist institution to be avoided. Neither are they afraid to join leftist organizations. They simply do not see the point anymore. In their perspective, the *guerrilla* is now just another political party, with nice ideas, perhaps, but unlikely to win, and even less likely to change the country. They lost, and that is that. For many, it is so basic a fact it is hardly worth discussing. Twenty-five years ago, political desire hit a wall, and then was forced to choose between obviously flawed alternatives, each aimed at short-term gains. This sheds a different light on the oft-heard refrain, popular among leftist groups, that people blindly sell their votes in return for projects, personal favors, or cash. It seems more likely that this choice is made not out of ignorance, but based on the knowledge that all parties are crooked and that reform is a dream. One might as well get oneself

whatever one can out of the situation. To do otherwise is to lose out on the only benefits that politics brings.

These testimonials, which echo the emotions and narrative structure encapsulated in the MOSCAMED conspiracy, articulate an implicit understanding between the state and the populace regarding the limits to democracy. This understanding generates an affective force field marking the line beyond which democracy must not tread. It also registers the futility many Mayans feel regarding their power to change the situation. These built in limits are perhaps the most important, if almost completely invisible, feature of the imagination of democracy by among many rural Mayans in the post war period, influencing, to a large degree, the way that they engage in politics. The ethnographic data presented in this chapter suggests that what is different now is how contemporary revolutionary sentiments of mistrust and anger articulate pervasive pessimism and a profound sense of impotence, foreclosing in the popular imagination the possibility of revolutionary political change. These interpretive inclinations and affective dispositions suggest that supposedly neutral attempts to enforce the law have the additional effect of reproducing the specter of state as an immovable force in the imaginations of many rural Guatemalans. Many Mayans imagine a vampiric, predatory state with a fixed intentionality and unmatchable strength whose violence goes unchecked. This predatory state is the narrative backdrop against which current state violence is interpreted, allowing the re-inscription of previously understood limits in the evolving political context of the post Accords period. Contemporary political cynicism is the vestige of past state violence, its continued effects.

CONCLUSION: RE-IMAGINING MAYAN AGENCY

Mayan political imaginaries are fundamentally thwarted. Most Mayans share revolutionary worldviews and a deep desire to end what they see as racially coded exploitation and exclusion driven by a ruthless capitalism. Yet for most Mayans, these desires are accompanied by an unshaking belief in an omnipotent and sinister state. These persistent state fantasies are not "false," they constitue reality, endowing the social order with an aura of inevitability. The knowledge that these issues are still off of the political agenda undermines gestures towards peace and social reform. These effects are reinforced by targeted violence against social movements, which triggers memory of past violence for those old enough to remember the war, convincing many rural Mayan leaders that pursuing radical reform is much more dangerous than staying inside the lines. Such attempts would eventually go nowhere, at best; and obedience might even bring some rewards. Violence today no longer aims to incite mass panic, but to remind people that meaningful political change is just an idle fantasy in contradistinction from the unquestionable power of the state. Few Mayans believe—even remotely—in the power of the vote. What I mean is that they believe that they could vote however they like, but that, in the end, it will not matter. Of course, this limit defies the spirit of democracy, whose only acceptable limit is, supposedly, the ability for human beings to imagine a version of a brighter political future that at least a plurality of the population can agree upon. This is not to say that past errors and existing racism on the left do not serve as obstacles for Mayans who are otherwise reform-minded, only that they are insufficient, taken together, to explain the contemporary Mayan conservatism.

Ernesto Laclau (1979) argues that ability of populist discourses to absorb opposition relies on including oppositional discourses and demands in a social movement

that defends 'the people' and the power bloc (172). Attempts to articulate "democratic interpellations"—by which he means popular political desires and ideologies—to the dominant class project, he suggests, must constrain these same impulses, which are inherently threatening to existing hierarchies. But how does this constraint work? Laclau mentions state repressive measures, but does not describe how this renders one populist interpellation more effective than another for particularly situated actors at a given historical moment (184). This would require situating populist policies within a broader genealogy of attempts by a colonial regime of power to reshape subaltern political behaviors and imaginaries. In Guatemala, populist rhetoric accompanies continued repression. In this context, oppositional commonsense articulates not to political obedience, alongside a pervasive sense of political defeat. These conditions draw our attention to the ways that state power in postcolonial societies often depends on their ability to generate the disempowered political affect of their citizenry. Affect, in this case more than ideology, must be seen as the decisive terrain of political struggle.

Feelings of powerlessness such as those embedded in the MOSCAMED conspiracy and expressed in explicit discussions of politics, while durable and effective, cannot be frozen in place forever; they require constant reinforcement, restatements of the law that pre-empt or respond desire that exceeds the dominant order. When I first heard about the national police and military's violent response to free trade protesters last March, I thought that the response was far exaggerated, a careless, and potentially counterproductive, exercise of power. But it also seems possible that, among certain circles of military and government officials, there is an understanding that the Guatemalan state needs to violently overreact from time to time; it needs to show that it is still as ruthless and capable as before in order to reinforce the commonly known fact that openly opposing governmental policies leads nowhere. This common-sense logic is an

important piece of background knowledge that helps maintain politics as usual in Guatemala. It is a key nexus in a vicious circle: It is the lack of opposition that allows selective repression of social movements to continue.

The concern now is that in the new neoliberal world order, where the market is the only valid measure, abysmal standards for human rights, and the daily suffering that these low standards help maintain, have become cemented as the new normal. "Good enough" human rights records—read rife with abuses, but on the "right" side of the war on terror and trade issues—are becoming increasingly commonplace. Not only have countries outside of the Middle East left the radar screen, but the US's renewed tolerance for human rights abuses (especially those made in the name of protecting US interests) has substantially eroded its credibility as a champion of human rights. Where does this leave countries like Guatemala? Guatemalan elites—both military and neoliberal—perceive postwar social movements as threatening much more than an abstract legality. The values that these groups promote, and, more importantly, the desires for a different life that their discourses connect to at the grassroots, are fundamentally incompatible with the neocolonial and neoliberal social order. That rural Mayans would begin to clamor for meaningful democracy is unacceptable to most Guatemalan elites. The Guatemalan government is currently experimenting with selective use of violence against social movements in hopes of establishing a precedent for the legitimate use of force, using the tortured logic in which terror is seen as defending rule based democracy, and civilization itself. But lest we lapse into hopelessness, we should consider the following.

Violence is one lynchpin of Guatemalan society; but it is also a source of tensions. On the one hand, violence is necessary to reproduce the Guatemalan social order, reaffirming both the "state's" totality and brutality in the minds of the rural poor who might otherwise oppose it. On the other, each use of violence generates refusals of

previously acceptable uses of force. Unlike the past, news about state violence causes reproach from solidarity networks and influential donor nations. Changes in Guatemalan political culture, part of larger shifts in global governance, make the wholesale return to counterinsurgent tactics against peaceful movements improbable. Even as they advocate low intensity warfare against social movements throughout Latin America and around the world, it seems unlikely that the US would condone or support the genocidal policies of the past. Although the Guatemalan social order would be more vulnerable than ever to a widely supported non-violent political movement, or an electoral coup, many rural Mayans remain convinced of its impossibility.

NOTES

[1] While many Mayans conflate human rights with the office of human rights in their village, and specifically oppose the office of human rights' efforts to let local criminals free, the other ideas about human rights are not controversial, although public discourses on these matters, as discussed in the chapter on historical memory, are limited.

[2] These authors make the additional distinction between conspiracy theory and "occult cosmology" by which they mean a local conception of how the world works, with a conspiracy theory explainin¡g perhaps only a small part of this world. They also contend that conspiracy theories can contain or reveal occult cosmologies, which I hold is the case in the MOSCAMED conspiracy, which reveals changes in a revolutionary poetic.

[3]I am thankful to Ajb'ee Jimenez for sharing these ethnographic details.

[4] Lopez, Rigoberto Escobar. *Prensa Libre*. July 31, 2004. "*Queman Puesto de Control de MOSCAMED"*

[5] This occurs every so often. See Julio Lara. *Prensa Libre*. July 27, 2005. "*Avioneta se estrella en cerro en Huehuetenango*".

[6] Their environmental analysis in 2001 claims that Spinosad will be integrated in to their previous integrated control method as described in 1996 EA, which includes malathion.

[7] Some groups still have doubts regarding the environmental effects of the new insecticides, and points to discrepancies between the Guatemalan Environmental Ministry's report and the actual practices of the program. Available online at www.tropicoverde.org/BoletinMoscamed/efectos_del_programa_moscamed.htm

[8] With regards to its health effects, MOSCAMED admits that, "hypersensitive humans experience toxicological symptoms and signs at dosage levels much lower than those that

are required to produce the same symptoms in the majority of the population," but adds that they "constitute only a small portion of the total population,' and that they are "not aware of any listing of hypersensitive individuals located in the program areas." Not only does the report refuse to consider that children and elderly or ill persons might qualify as "hypersensitive," it also reassures the reader that these people do not exist, by saying that there are none on record. However as MOSCAMED is well aware, comprehensive health data about the population—where medical itself attention is notoriously scarce—is non-existent and not organized in a central database to be supposedly checked by the supposedly concerned MOSCAMED.

[9] Their arrogance also leads to attempts to silence independent commentary on their program. After a presentation of this paper in Huehuetenango led to a heated discussion with MOSCAMED agents regarding malathion use, the regional director of the program, Gordon Tween, wrote the following letter to my dean at the University of Texas at Austin:

> Dear Mr John Dollard-
>
> Recently a gentleman by the name of Nicholas Copeland, allegedly from the University of Austin, gave a presentation on the Medfly Program (eradication and control of the Mediterranean fruit fly) being conducted by the US Government and foreign cooperators in Central America and Mexico (you will note the title and other information above). Needless to say, he was poorly informed and even worse, ill prepared to report anything about the subject matter. My desire, although it is perhaps not directed to the correct person, is to seek some additional information regarding this person and determine if he is really affiliated with your university. If I have sent this to you in error could you please refer me to someone who could help.
>
> My concern is twofold but I am curious to see if this person is a graduate of Austin University. We are planning to move within the next year or so to the Austin area. Our children, who are high achievers will need to think about a college and university in the area. They are studying in a private school right now that demands a great deal and they have also learned much from our many travels. They are studying their fourth language, focus intensely on music (cello, violin and drums) Adrian is attending Interlochen Music Camp this summer, both have started flying lessons, and both do very well academically. Neither one has decided what they would like to pursue but there is an interest in science and architecture. On our minds is where should they consider going to college? So you see my curiosity also has a personal component.
>
> Why do I care about the presentation? I am the Regional Director for this program and responsible to you, as a taxpayer, my department, and the US

Congress for the judicial use of 35 million dollars annually. We have a technical program that would stagger even the most conservative biologist or academic. Our major efforts go into sterile insects as an eradication tool for these kinds of pests. Producing 3 billion sterile insects a week we pride ourselves in what we do. So, if in fact there is a Copeland who has graced your halls he did not profit from the experience. This kind of input only misleads people by providing a lot of misinformation we have to correct later on. However, if there is a real interest in our program I can provide you a unique and interesting seminar that demonstrates how our government protects agriculture while insuring we are good stewards of the environment no matter where we find ourselves.

I would appreciate your assistance and perhaps your department of entomology or biology would like to hear first hand about where pest control could be destined to go in the future. Thank you.

Gordon TweenRegional DirectorUSDA APHIS IS

U S Embassy-Guatemala

Luckily, after I explained the situation and presented a copy of the paper I had presented, the Dean relaxed and told that he had no intention of stopping my research.

[10] Unlike most historians who write about Guatemala, the agronomists I spoke with—mostly Ladinos--including leaders of local development institutions, do not usually discuss the roots of the land shortage. For a discussion of changes in the effects of the creation of the coffee economy on land tenure in the highlands, see: Handy, Jim. 1984. Gift of the Devil: A History of Guatemala. Boston: South End.; McCreery, David. 1994. Rural Guatemala: 1760-1940. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Cambranes, Julio. 1985. Coffee and Peasants in Guatemala, 1880-1920. Guatemala City: University of San Carlos.

[11] Historical examples abound. The Melville's provide an infuriating discussion of systematic government complicity with insecticide poisonings on cotton plantations in the late 1960s. There is little reason to assume that these practices have changed or that these are limited to Guatemala. See also Wright, Angus (1990) *The Death of Ramon Gonzales: the Modern Agricultural Dilemma. Austin: University of Texas Press*

[12]For a discussion of the insufficiency of the official response to the Stan, a common theme since the disaster struck, see: *Prensa Libre* October 1, 2006. Also available online at www.prensalibre.com/pl/2006/octubre/01/152877.html

Chapter Four: Greening the Counterrevolution: Rural Cooperative and Credit Programs in the 1970s

> All these activities aim at awakening the campesinos (peasants) to the possibilities of economic, social, and eventually political organization and action. Our expanded cooperatives program goes further, establishing mechanisms for organization and action on a large scale. (United States Agency for International Development 1970, 8)

This chapter examines the Rural Cooperative Development Program, the centerpiece to the agrarian modernization component of the Rural Development Program of 1970 and 1975. In this chapter, and the next three, I examine how this program emerged and operated within a regime of colonial governmentality, by which I mean I examine how this modern technology of power was deployed to secure spatial and ideological control over Mayans in the rural highlands. The first section reviews state agrarian policy after the Counterrevolution. The second section examines the planning of the Rural Credit and Cooperative Program (RCCP) by members of US Agency for International Development USAID, the US State Department, members of the International Development Foundation, other assembled "experts", (including anthropologists), and, of course, officials from the US and Guatemalan governments. Using official documents, some of which are de-classified, I draw attention to the fundamental assumptions of the key narratives that surrounded the program, and the fears and optimism that these programs generated among policymakers. Then, using the terminal report of the USAID regional director and the director of the cooperative program, I describe the fate of the program. In the conclusion, I argue that one of the

primary effects of the cooperative program was to extend the counterinsurgency by generating optimism among state and military planners that there was a technological way of resolving the problem of peasant revolt without redistributionist policies. This naïve inflexibility helped justify the continuation of violent repression of between guerrilla forces, which led to increased participation in the guerrilla movement and ended in genocide.

AGRARIAN POLITICS UNDER THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP 1954-1969

Without a doubt, Guatemala's rural Mayan population felt the sting of the Counterrevolution. The new president Castillo Armas went about undoing every aspect of the legacy of his defeated predecessor, Jacobo Arbenz. He illegalized both labor and peasant unions, branding them both as 'communist' while making communism itself a crime. Campesinos that had settled on expropriated land were evicted (Melville and Melville 1971, 122). [1] Cooperatives founded under the Arbenz regime were banned. The National Agrarian Bank, which gave loans to small farmers, was also closed. Agricultural production went down dramatically (123).[2] It would almost seem that the Castillo Armas government was almost going out of its way to prove to the planter class that it had no concern for the peasantry, such was its anti-communist zeal. But such a stance was untenable in practice. The state had to make some gesture made towards the agrarian question, or so it seemed to appear. Sidestepping the entire question of agrarian reform, Castillo Armas started a colonization program in the Petén, focused on two agrarian zones in currently unoccupied territories.[3] Participants were sought from the rural poor. The lands, cut out of pure jungle, were very poor, with only a small layer of topsoil. They were also quite isolated from the rest of Guatemalan society, making market access difficult; and they were not large enough to meet the huge demand. And,

due to the fact that the Guatemalan elite were not willing to pay enough taxes to fund the rural development programs for the poor, preferring spending on security, these programs were systematically underfunded, despite the fact that the US gave $2,400,000 (134). The zones were a failure. Alongside the agrarian zones there was some governmental land redistribution; but these levels were small, and nothing compared to the ongoing rates of evictions. In all, these attempts seemed little more than a diversion, designed to create plausible deniability, than a comprehensive agrarian policy.

When Ydígoras Fuentes took over the presidency after the assassination of Castillo Armas in 1957, little about this general pattern of neglect seemed likely to change. He was hand-selected by the US, mainly for his willingness to let the US use Guatemala as a launching pad for an invasion of Cuba.[4] There proposed agrarian policy was heavily criticized by congressmen from the DC, for lack of attention to the "social function of the land." Nevertheless, in 1960, a four-fold plan was announced, the most significant part of which was the establishment of the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation (INTA). INTA's job was to administer the distribution of idle lands, but defined these lands in such a way as to render the operation meaningless. There was little change from the agrarian laws of Armas, under the General Directory of Agrarian Affairs, (DGAA) (148). The Minister of Agriculture under Ydígoras, Peralta Azurdia, took charge of the DGAA and the National Fincas, which had been expropriated under Arbenz, and that Castillo Armas had returned to their previous owners. Instead of partitioning the remaining 123 *fincas* to needy peasants, Ydígoras gave wealthy businessmen and ranchers the task of managing the lands. They distributed about 10% of the lands to peasants, and the rest went to finance government debt, most of which was owed to the US for an initial loan made by the Eisenhower administration to the Armas government (150). DC and PR opposition to these decisions was ignored, as were

peasant's heartfelt petition to purchase the lands. When Crisostomo Castillo took over the DGAA, he pushed the sale of national lands to the middle class because, "Native peasants lack sufficient preparation, laboriousness, and the spirit of initiative" to merit them or work them effectively (150). The result was favoritism in sales at ridiculously low rates. Even when corn was in scarce supply in 1959 and 1961 the only step the Ydígoras government took to help peasants was to ask plantation owners to lease their fallow lands (150-153). While not helping the peasantry, this circus with national lands helped pay back debts and gave an appearance of land reform, fulfilling the priorities of that regime.

Alongside this "agrarian program" were continuous evictions of poor peasants—the vast majority of whom were Mayans—from lands that they either occupied legally, or had squatted, sometimes for generations, without titles. People remaining on UFCo lands were forced off; and even more were forced off coffee plantation land. As evictions showed a propensity to turn violent, the military became involved—the perfect marriage of capital and the state. In 1959, hundreds of dispossessed families marched on the National Palace, demanding land, but were mostly ignored. Anger at this harsh treatment led to a "barracks revolt" led by young officers in the military, which was summarily put down and, although only Guatemalans were involved, denounced by Ydígoras as part of a planned Cuban invasion (161). Eisenhower agreed, and sent an aircraft carrier to patrol the coastline.

In fact, the revolt did have a high level of support from the peasants in Zacapa. Hundreds arrived asking for arms, despite the fact that, "This was not in the program, nor was it even anticipated by the rebels, who could not make up their minds whether to arm the peasants" (162).[5] In hopes of preempting future outbreaks, Eisenhower set up a counter-insurgency headquarters in Izabal in 1962, complete with artillery, planes, and

troops (163). They went to work almost immediately with civilian programs, giving wells, clinics and food to peasants in the northern department. At the same time, land expulsions continued; and now some were led by right wing paramilitary groups, supposedly dedicated to fighting communist threats, but probably more interested in defending property claims of the plantation owners who funded these supposedly autonomous organizations. While Ydígoras distributed more land than Armas, his dedication to the cause was more rhetoric than real.

After the Bay of Pigs debacle, President Kennedy established the Alliance for Progress. The Alliance was a direct challenge to communism in all of Latin America, a symbol of the US commitment to share the fruits of freedom by spreading the reach of capitalist prosperity.[6] Responding to these initiatives, Peralta Azurdia, the next Guatemalan president, announced an incremental program to "raise the standard of living" of the peasantry, not through land expropriations, but with absolute respect for private property rights (176). The Alliance charter called for a substantial agrarian reform with the recognition of the social function of land. But predictably these themes caused a furor among Guatemalan elites, who immediately kicked back against what they considered "vague" notions of social justice, which reminded them of the hated decree 900 (181). In response to this call for substantial redistribution of land, and therefore power, throughout the continent, Peralta, unwilling to contemplate substantial reform, focused once again on colonization in the Petén. Like before, there was simply too little land, of too poor quality to meet the demand (187).[7] Still, more official rhetoric cynically predicted colonization as the solution to national poverty. Nevertheless, the US signed on. Even when USAID gave another $2 million loan to Guatemala for resettlement, the results were predictably deplorable (190-191).[8]

High demand for land, massive social inequality, and government unwillingness to do anything but reinforce this dynamic aptly summarizes decades of agrarian policy under the military dictatorship. Yet, as Kennedy had warned, this system was not stable. By the mid 1960s, the situation had worsened. The land problem was becoming more acute and labor conditions were still appalling. The army was called in to force workers onto cotton plantations, notorious for low pay and exposing workers to dangerous insecticides (196). All of this gave moral weight to the new guerrilla movement in Eastern Guatemala, and the FAR in Guatemala City, both of which were making great headway with their calls for land reform and violent insurrection.[9] By 1965 they were regularly engaged in skirmishes with the army, and showing determination. The government responded by intensifying repression. On March 6, 1966, the army captured 28 labor leaders from the PGT in Guatemala City, including Victor Manuel Guiterrez and Leonardo Castillo Flores, both labor leaders under Arbenz. Two days later a police raid abducted every adult male—over100 peasants from Rio Hondo, Zacapa, holding them for questioning (198-199).[10] In response to the kidnapping of the 28, the guerrilla kidnapped the Secretary of Information, the Head of the Supreme Court, and the President of Congress, hoping for a prisoner exchange. But the 28 had already been murdered.

Even before these events, the US government was not pleased that Peralta had taken a "go it alone" policy on both military and development strategy. The planter elite was also unsettled, fearful as always of peasant organizing getting out of hand. With US approval, Julio César Mendez Montenegro, a civilian and, representing the reformist PR won the 1966 elections. Putatively democratic elections were a further qualification for increased US aid. Not a politician—he was ex-Dean of the University Law School—Mendez decided to run after his brother, Mario Montenegro, an ex-labor leader under Arbenz and a revolutionary leader in subsequent years, was found shot in his home, most

likely assassinated, in 1965. Although Mendez won the election, he had only a plurality and so congress had to decide the winner. A subsequent show of support for the US for his victory was the only thing that allowed a reformist candidate to take power amidst accusations of communism from the MLN (209). Mendez had no real power base, and needed to prove to the army and the US government that he would govern within the lines. This meant defending private property, ignoring the demands of peasantry and labor, and cracking down on guerrilla. He capitulated by helping to cover up the massacre of the 28, denouncing peasant land invasions, accepting US counterinsurgency assistance, and supporting the army as they stepped up repression of unions in the city and peasant organizations in the countryside (213-214; 264-270). Angry that Mendez' response was not sufficiently repressive, MLN leaders attempted two coups against Mendez and formed paramilitaries.

Mendez' new agrarian policy, "included the distribution of the remaining National Finca lands to the workers; the restructuring of the existing agrarian zones; and the use of the unexploited government lands in Izabal, Quiche, Petén, Alta Verapaz and Huehuetenango" (217).[11] Most of this plan was rehashed—limited redistribution and more colonization. One new law established a cooperative federation on the recently distributed land to be overseen by INTA. Like previous attempts at agrarian policy without land reform, these programs were insufficient for a rural population that was growing rapidly and were systematically underfunded. Petén lands were even being distributed to *latifundistas* (large plantation owners), making colonization another welfare program for the wealthy. This hollow populist rhetoric could little to convince the peasantry not to join guerrilla organizations; the latter continued to gain ground (219-234). Violent land expulsions were increasing as the planters moved to expand their holdings. Backing up their land claims with the military and their own private armies,

this exacerbated the already acute problem of land scarcity (253-260). Counterinsurgency operations picked up in the east under Arana Osorio. Thousands of peasants were killed in the space of the three years 1966-1970 (270-271). Mendez pleaded for plantation owners to respect the right to organize, but lost whatever small measure of control he had.

One bright spot for *campesinos* during the otherwise dismal Mendez regime for was the space opened, mostly by USAID and Military Mission pressure for social development, for cooperatives. Peasant groups were seeking alternatives. In 1965, five delegates from independent cooperatives in the western highlands established the National Federation of Cooperatives of Savings and Credit, FENACOAC. FENACOAC, organized in 1965, was dedicated to lifting rural Mayans and poor *campesinos* out of poverty. Cooperative strength is measured in numbers and FENACOAC was growing significantly. As mentioned in the first chapter, this was largely driven by the development activities of the Catholic Church through *Acción Católica*. By 1972 it had 79 affiliated cooperatives in the country, whose representatives met in a general assembly. Size allowed them a large amount of collective purchasing power. In addition to the economy of scale that this allowed, FENACOAC cooperatives were integrated together through a system of representatives. This made them into an increasingly significant political voice, reflective of the needs of their members, who were among the most invisible and marginalized sectors of Guatemalan society, the rural, mostly Mayan, peasantry. FENACOAC cooperatives flourished these years (Gaitan 1972).[12]

THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF 1970

In1970, the Guatemalan government in coordination with The United States Agency for International Development implemented what was heralded as an aggressive new approach to poverty reduction in the western highlands. Through the Rural Development Plan the Guatemalan government directed an initial $143 million to agrarian development, including a $23 million in a rural sector loan from the US (USAID 1975). This was the first time since the Arbenz administration that the Guatemalan state made a concerted effort to promote the well being of the predominantly Mayan highlands. After several years of dialogue, study and planning in coordination with international development agencies, the Guatemalan government reorganized the Ministry of Agriculture, re-dedicating it to bringing the fruits of modernity to within reach of the most remote rural communities. Collectively responsible for fomenting Guatemala's "green revolution," the rural agrarian programs did more to define the meaning of development for highland Mayans more than any other initiative at the time.

The agrarian component of the Rural Development Plan was officially inaugurated when USAID reorganized the Guatemalan Agriculture Ministry MAGA, creating several new agencies including: BANDESA, the rural development bank who would channel the loan money from USAID into loans to small farmers; DIGESA the General Directory of Agricultural Services, to provide extension services to small farmers, and also to manage the delivery of credit and inputs, mainly chemical fertilizer; INDECA, for marketing and price stabilization; and ICTA, for agricultural research. These would be run through INTA, which would continue to handle land reform and resettlement. This coordinated set of institutions was known as the *Sector Publico Agrario* (Public Agrarian Sector). There were five elements to the Rural Development

Program: “basic grains production and marketing; 2) diversified crops production, research and technical assistance; 3) development of the handicrafts industry; 4) Infrastructural development; and 5) Cooperative development.” (Davidson 1976, 3).

The centerpiece of the agrarian component of the Rural Development Plan was the creation of agricultural cooperatives. Since 1964, USAID had undertaken several activities in the cooperative sector, including: supporting the National Credit Union Association, CUNA, whose role was to start local initiatives; forming a cooperative training school; and, contracting with the International Development Fund, IDF on a “pre-cooperative” training project (5). According to USAID, existing cooperative efforts were failing. CUNA credit unions had not proved a “viable, self-sustaining, effective, institution” and had lost its largest affiliate; the training school was not producing “effective cooperative leaders”; and IDF had since refused to work with the Guatemalan government (5). FECOAR cooperatives and DIGESA were intended to “complement” FENACOAC cooperatives. A 1969 AID evaluation of “concluded that […] FENACOAC was receiving just enough assistance to stay alive, but not enough to become viable”(6). Davidson’s report claims that USAID decided to provide financial assistance to FENACOAC to help them become independent of CUNA while at the same time as starting an additional cooperative initiative.

For the 1970 program, two parallel and similar cooperative programs were created: the General Directory of Agricultural Services, DIGESA, run by the Guatemalan government with funding and technical assistance from USAID; and the Rural Cooperative Development Project, funded and independently run by USAID. In addition, USAID coordinated with FENACOAC, helping fund some of their operations. In 1970, FENACOAC split a $2million loan package with a new cooperative system founded under the Rural Development Plan of 1970 and run by USAID. These programs had the

shared purpose of channeling credit, extension services, technical training and new agricultural inputs to rural farmers previously between rural highland communities and state agents and institutions. Each program had a very different conception of the problem that they were trying to address, program aims, and the means necessary to achieve their respective missions.

NARRATING THE SPACE OF COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

> Development agencies are in the business of trying to "sell" these packages, trying to locate and justify potential applications for them. […] Their problem is to find the right kind of problem; the kind of "problem" that requires the "solution" they are there to provide. This is the institutional context within which "development" discourse is located. (Ferguson 1991).

No single person, group, institution or government was solely responsible for creating a comprehensive agrarian development policy for the rural highlands. It was a product of the labors of a number of different groups, individuals and government representatives—each with at least a slightly different perspective on why development was needed and how it would work. The final policy took shape over several years. There were major differences in strategy and desired outcome between USAID and the Guatemalan government, which I will describe later. Along the way there were numerous debates regarding feasibility, tactics, and overall strategy, many of which, as I describe later, lasted as long as the program. Above and beyond—or perhaps underneath—these differences was a core set of, mostly shared, assumptions and interpretive tendencies, the combination of which created the narrative space of development—the imaginary constitution of the Guatemalan highlands as in need of a particular kind of development intervention, namely agrarian modernization. This narrative was inseparable from the programs themselves; it provided their conditions of

its intelligibility and desirability for development and government officials, who looked to these programs with promise.

Official statements describing the need for the program highlighted the following conditions: intense population pressures; extreme poverty; widespread illiteracy; and indigenous culture; seasonal migration; and suspicious, distrustful attitudes among the peasantry towards the outside world (Fledderjohn 1976, 3-4). Massive inequality was viewed as a cause for instability. It was a pre-emptive strategy, designed to stop revolutions before they start. Guatemala was a special case. Not only was it one of the most unequal countries in the hemisphere, but it had already had a popular revolution that was only able to be put down with extreme violence. The US government and USAID attributed these problems to the fact that "virtually no priority was given to providing services to help the traditional subsistence farmer increase his output" (USAID 1975, 47). The cooperative program was a concession to grassroots efforts for reform, emblematized by the autonomous cooperative movement.

This was not a transparent representation of a non-discursive highlands—no such thing exists—but instead constituted the rural highlands as a certain kind of reality. Rather than simply presenting 'facts,' development planners constituted facts and objects by employing certain concepts, elements they then wove into story. It was never inevitable, or even obvious, that the problem of underdevelopment would be diagnosed in the way that it was, neither was the kind of development that was prescribed as the solution. The crisis in rural agriculture was figured quite differently in the consciousness of rural Mayans who were the main protagonists of the autonomous cooperative movement and who development planners and state officials hoped would be the subjects of the USAID cooperative initiative.

The discourses constituting the RCCP borrowed heavily from existing tropes and narratives about indigenous culture, discourses of development, and a loose assortment of notions about third world countries. These discourses demonstrate a more or less shared set of rules and rules and conventions for talking about the problem which was to be addressed: the problem of poverty in rural Guatemala, and the larger problem of political instability, and, therefore notions of risk, to which it had for so long been intimately connected. These shared understandings and ways of constructing the problem were integral to the construction and final outcome of the program. This story, as much as any other technology or practice, was a part of what the program was spreading in the highlands.

The components of this imagined space I find most important were: a de-historicized understanding of rural poverty, specifically regarding the shortage of productive land in the highlands; an evolutionary model of culture; the naturalization of the Guatemalan economic and political structure and of the government's sovereignty over rural Mayans; a perception that poverty increased the likelihood of revolutionary organizing and the converse notion that poverty alleviation programs could diminish this threat. In distinct ways, these assumptions, often mutually reinforcing, exerted a powerful influence in the ultimate determination of the objectives, targets and trajectories of the agrarian development program.

**

The first aspect of the program I want to discuss is the tendency towards the naturalization of the prevailing socio-political order. Most specifically, the idea of real land reform is relegated to the realm of fantasy. Official discourses were highly ambivalent in the way that they danced around the subject, much in the way that one might around an 800 lb gorilla. Speaking out of both sides of the mouth was a central

part of the "New Directions of Development" initiatives of USAID. New Directions was a supposedly souped up successor to the Alliance for Progress. Apparently, it was born with a credibility problem. On the very first page of their report to the 94th Congress on their missions in Bolivia, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, they start a section with the heading: "COMMITTEE PLEDGE TO FOLLOW UP ON REFORMS." After which it reads " Sensitive to the contentions that the ND reforms were only superficial and would affect no greater changes in AID's operations the committee declared: The changes are not cosmetic, but real. We intend change—drastic change—in the planning and operation of our US bilateral economic assistance programs" (USAID 1975, 1).

Was it a bold new approach or just a new marketing scheme? The fine print reveals one overwhelming similarity with past approaches. On the one hand, USAID viewed "sweeping" land reform as necessary, but, on the other, they believed that it "was unlikely to be undertaken soon in most Latin American countries." What is new is the apology for *not* doing land reform. This fact that land reform is off the agenda makes it "imperative […] that agricultural productivity and new income per-acre be increased" (USAID 1975, 7). Instead of a political variable, the "land shortage" is taken as immutable fact, background information irrelevant to development policy. In fact, the real challenge for development is how to include the rural masses, and, thereby, avert a communist uprising, without changing the country in any meaningful way. This was precisely the way that the problem was presented to a panel of so called "experts" on Guatemala, development, insurgency, counterinsurgency and international affairs who were convened by the International Development Fund to discuss rural strategy in Guatemala under the military dictatorship.

The minutes of this meeting, the results of which were recently declassified, provide fresh insight into how these policymakers understood the goals of the Rural

Cooperative Development Program. After describing the extent of land and wealth inequality they state that the:

> IDF's objective is to assist the small farmers […] to crash this exclusive circle and become members in good standing through the medium of their own representative organizations.
>
> Naturally, the integration of the small landholder implies a shift in power and a redistribution of available goods and services. Therefore, if the motor for change has to come from within the internal dynamics of the country, a methodology has to be developed that would accomplish the integration of the small landholder without a corresponding loss to the other sectors; as well as to help the traditional sectors reappraise their interests in terms of such integration. (IDF 1968, 5-6)

At the same time that the development narrative constructs the inequality of Guatemalan society as problematically unequal, it naturalizes the existing Guatemalan social structure. Development is seen as facilitating the integration of rural Mayans into "national life," which is treated as both inevitable and benign. Inequality is a problem, yes, but it is the Mayans who must develop to make up for this discrepancy, not the sociopolitical order itself. The "national life" of the country, the brokers of "national power," and its "socioeconomic process" are all taken for granted as unchangeable realities. This is the spirit in which Ann Brownell, director of the IDF in 1968 asks: "How can the small farmer be integrated in a manner acceptable to himself and to the present power structure?" The direction of the integration is predetermined: Mayans will integrate into the national structure; the national structure does not have to adjust itself to take the needs of the rural Mayan population into account. Whatever changes happen occur from, "*within the internal dynamics of the country.*" However, it is hoped that eventually the *"traditional sectors reappraise their interests."* Supporting reforms led by autonomous social movements was outside of the realm of acceptable policy options. That was too much democracy. What exactly "internal dynamics" means is obvious, if perplexing. Oddly, it seems to refer to the very structure of wealth and privilege that

USAID discourses since the Alliance for Progress have criticized as a source for instability. Unfortunately, as history has seen, up until the threat of communism in the region, the interests of the US government were completely in line with the lavish privilege of Guatemalan planters. And, given the national origins of companies like UFCo, there was no clear division between internal and external dynamics. Now a sort of compromise was necessary. But this change is really no change at all. Just as it was during the Alliance for Progress, when the US had attempted to use "soft power" to change state policy in Latin America and were ignored, they lowered their expectations and met those governments wherever they were willing to go, with few objections and sometimes full financing.

With talk of historic land inequalities a taboo subject in development circles, development discourses were forced to get more creative in their official characterization of the problem of poverty and social marginalization in the highlands. Unfortunately, creativity meant recycling some very well worn themes. The first was to render the problem in primarily demographic terms, to see it as the "classic" Malthusian problem of too many people competing for too few resources. Scarcity is the human condition (at least according to this discourse). These notions permeated the development world. USAID regional director John Davidson warned that, "over the last two decades, the growth of the agricultural sector has averaged about 5%, barely keeping pace with population growth. Increases in production have resulted from expanding the area under cultivation rather than changes in its productive methods" (4). Similarly, when USAID project manager David Fledderjohn describes the Rural Cooperative Project in an article for the International Journal of Cooperative Development in 1974, he described the location as the "densely-populated highland areas of Guatemala" (Fledderjohn 1974, 1). In this framework, the sheer quantity of humans outstrips the objective productive

capacity of the natural environment; geometrical trends for population growth ensure disaster. Grimly, it predicts a future catastrophe of unknown proportions. One imagines chaos, anarchy. The persuasive power of this rhetorical strategy lies in its directness and its appeal to cold reason. But while the Malthusian framework foregrounds a mathematical dilemma, it renders invisible the non-inevitability of the main determinant of overpopulation: land inequalities rooted in the lack of a land reform.[13] Malthusian logics function here as a rhetorical ethical straightjacket: take *these* measures to increase carrying capacity…or suffer the consequences!

This enforced ignorance regarding the role of Guatemalan inequalities on generating poverty had other enabling effects for development discourse. To run a development program, like any other intervention, it is necessary to have things that are wrong that can be fixed within the framework one operates. With agrarian reform off the table, USAID planners looked elsewhere for something that they could manipulate to achieve their objectives. One of the first stops was the vast repertory of stereotypes about rural Mayans. Instead of political and historical factors, development documents reveal that planners focused on the "cultural and economic isolation of the Indian." "Disproportionate participation based on racial origin" was viewed as a "usual complication" in "the Latin context" (USAID 1973). A New Directions report to Congress blamed poverty on the fact that "Forty percent of the population descend from the Mayan Indian and still speak their own native Indian languages rather than Spanish. This complicates instruction and contributes to an illiteracy rate of 62%, one of the highest in the hemisphere. The cultural and economic isolation of the Indian is the most dramatic problem facing the nation" (USAID 1975). In a tortured logic, Mayans, whose illiteracy has been legally mandated and economically prohibited for generations, are somehow responsible for their own illiteracy, and, by extension, their own poverty.

In this discourse, Mayans were backward and simple, and development would focus on different ways of alleviating these traits. Development would replace "tradition" with "modernity." Instead of internally complex and externally linked, Mayan culture is seen as a discrete and bounded unity. Present here is a notion of empty calendrical time, which stages an inexorable march of "cultural evolution" in which modern cultures outcompete primitive cultures in the survival of the fittest. Mayans are "living fossils" survivals from a past age (Fabian 1983). Not only is indigenous culture represented as a bounded and known thing, it is also seen as objectively lower on the scale of human evolution than "modern" culture—whatever that means. An interesting variation on this theme was present in the early days of debating the types of programs necessary to solve Guatemala's dilemma, ie. how to avert a civil war without agrarian reform. One of the key speakers at that meeting, still a noted expert on 'cultural difference', was the famous Harvard political scientist, Samuel Huntington:

> I don't have any particular definition of political development. I don't think it would be worthwhile defining that term. It is an umbrella term. Everybody identifies what he likes with political development, which he assumes is something that everybody likes.
>
> The issue is what priority you give to developing organizations and organizational capabilities in a society, and in most societies which we think of as being underdeveloped, this is the one thing that is in very scarce supply. Consequently, we are building organizations and building the capacity to build organizations is not just the substance but the crucial essence. It may not be the only thing that counts but this is the thing that enables some societies, some cultures, to function in ways that what we generally consider very superior ways to other societies and cultures (IDF 1968, 97).

Dr. Huntington is convinced that he has identified the elusive kernel of modernity—the special thing missing in all societies where development is lacking and present in all developed societies: the "capacity to build organizations." These remarks obviously predate multiculturalism. Cultural difference is bad, period. Worse, they banalize the

racial terror that accompanied the construction of a modern economy in Guatemala. This framework implies that the violence of conquest was part of an inevitable broad historical process through which so-called "primitive" cultures are selected against in favor of the more fit, "modern" cultures. Or, alternatively, it erases the violence of conquest in shaping the forms of underdevelopment in the "cultures" that we see today. More recently, this representation erases the history of Mayan participation in national politics. Is it not possible that the political "disorganization" being described here in a very sweeping manner could be a inability on the part of the observer to recognize, or positively value, the forms of social organizations that did exist, or a failure to appreciate the historical reasons why they were lacking? Almost certainly it is both. Political organizing had not only been present in the highlands decades before, but it was *still* present in 1968. There was an incessant cry for land reform, if not always an organized movement! What is more, most Mayans towns had their own cooperatives! Why organizations were weak by the late 1960s had nothing to do with inherent backwardness, but systematic repression. Nevertheless, in this representation an entire cultural shift is necessary to implant "modern" forms of political organizing in the communities. This 'lack' is the impediment to development and it is purely negative. Pathological Indian culture will inevitably and naturally give way to idealized modern culture in which the participants will "live fuller, more productive lives" (USAID 1973). Nothing of value will be lost. Here, Guatemala becomes grouped as just another third world "underdeveloped," a common cultural pathology, the cure for which is a de-culturation/inculturation process, enabled by development.

Both the erasure of social inequalities, the vilification of Mayan culture, and the Malthusian logic were present in another feature of the discourses surrounding the RCCP the disparagement of subsistence agriculture as a means of economic provisioning. In

what seems to be a massive guilt transference, development discourses blamed traditional agricultural practices for the food shortage:

> In the last decade, agricultural growth has been restricted by various factors including overspecialization of crops, poor land use and distribution, lack of emphasis on internally consumed products, poor marketing systems and an inadequate institutional framework for accelerating agricultural development (USAID 1973).

Poor land distribution is mentioned third in a long list, and given no priority as a primary cause of poverty and underdevelopment. Presumably, each of these factors are equally responsible for the current condition. In any case, all of the other problems mentioned will be addressed (although not solved as we shall see later) by the development program, *but not that one*. Another role fulfilled by this construction of the problem is that it enumerates specific problems that can be fixed (Ferguson 1991). It identifies small and technical problems that a development agency can sink its teeth into. Instead of generating anger that rural Guatemalans have had their land stolen, are enslaved on huge ranches, are recruited for labor at the end of a bayonet, and are malnourished, development documents express alarm that "small farmers do not use modern production methods, achieve low yields, and have little access to the institutional credit system." John Davidson, USAID program coordinator, found that "Fertilizers use is low in Guatemala" (4). The seemingly impassioned moral plea made by David Fledderjohn, director of the USAID cooperative program, rings quite hollow indeed when understood in the context of Guatemalan's apartheid-like political economy: *More than anything else*, there are simply *not enough resources* available to assist the hundreds and thousands of small and medium sized farmers of the country in making the transition from subsistence farming to a point at which they may participate in agricultural commerce and contribute to the national economy (1974, 5). What is needed is what the development agency can offer: technology, fertilizer, training and credit—nothing else is

relevant. Quite visible here is a faith in scientific progress to enhance the human condition. New technologies are material manifestations of modernity and are transparently good. The reason agricultural production is lagging behind is the failure to make use of technological advances in agriculture. In addition, there is the blanket assumption that what is best for all Mayans, indeed all small farmers everywhere, is a transition to capitalist economics. These were all measures that *many* Mayans were taking to lift themselves up out of the abyss of poverty, not all of them. Now the state, saying that they lacked it, was going to provide these things for them, and nothing else. Here we see a trend, one that will be discussed more in the future: states and governing agencies latching onto grassroots practices of resistance to form governmental programs, gutted of their original political orientations and objectives.

CIVIL ACTION DEVELOPMENT AND COUNTERINSURGENCY TACTICS

The above descriptions suggest a high measure of cynicism and banality in the formation of the RCCP. Instead of having as its primary goal to alleviate the suffering of the rural Mayans, USAID cooperative development made a certain form of poverty alleviation and refashioning of Mayan political culture one part in a larger strategy to safeguard the dominant Guatemalan political and social order. But there was another element that was just as important as their banality: their naïveté. Examination of policy and planning documents reveals an innocent hopefulness. This affective state was generated by the cooperative technology, which was idealized as a delivery mechanism that would allow for a surgical reorganization of Guatemalan society in its entirety. The following passage from Ann Brownell, the acting president of the IDF, while enumerating the miracles the RCCP was imagined to make possible, exudes this faith:

> To create a mechanism to constructively employ the popular energies in their own self-improvement thereby reducing the pressure from frustration which often leads to radical change. Truitt, in his paper "To turn the alliance for progress over to the People" makes a good case for measuring development in terms relative to popular aspirations.
>
> Develop a leadership at the national level sympathetic with rural problems and which can bring about change through the established legal structures and in accordance with the dynamics of the system.
>
> Develop linkages between the various sectors to facilitate the flow of communication to allay suspicion.
>
> Promote between the sectors a relationship of mutual dependence so that an improvement in the relative position of the small landholders will also benefit the other sectors. (IDF 1968, 7-8)

Development programs to reach deeply into the hearts of communities, and to be able to make a precise alteration of the social and political behaviors. Present here is the ideology of popular hard work: people will make the program work. The program's function will be "tapping unexploited potential and latent energies of the population"(6). The result would also persuade the elites, by creating a manageable form of Mayan politics one that eschewed communist ideology. This was seen as the same as "turning the Alliance over to the people"—a mirror of popular desires. The IDF thought cooperatives could break down barriers of conflict and distrust by opening smooth channels of productive communication. The utopian solution would be acceptable to both sides.

This vision was debated at length by the members of the IDF committee. Some of them were not so optimistic. One person, Mr. Brian Buen of the newly founded Adlai Stevenson Institute for International Affairs (later the University of Chicago School for International Affairs) agreed with him:

> Mr Buen: Sooner or later, if we face the fundamental fact that what is required in many of these societies is a redistribution of economic, social and political power,

> it may be that this counter-revolutionary method, this civic action approach, which deals with the symptoms will have to be rejected and that instead of trying to suppress threats we have threats to order in certain circumstances we will just have to recognize that in the given system we really can't solve the problem and we may have to acquiesce in more radical solutions.
>
> The evolutionary means just may not work, and I think Brazil is a very good example. The real question for us is whether in certain circumstances we can acquiesce in and tolerate that. At the present time, at least in the US Government, we are going on one track with greater emphasis on political and social development which encourages one type of approach and one result, and at the same time we cling to this outmoded theory which has gotten us into great troubles in Vietnam. (95)

He sees this as a symptoms-based approach that will not resolve the central contradiction of land reform. He argues that solutions might be impossible within the system. In fact, they might be playing with fire, inviting the same disaster brought by these programs in Vietnam. Without a doubt, Vietnam was the specter hanging over discussions of civic-action development in Guatemala. Guatemala was the secret Vietnam in the western hemisphere, followed by Nicaragua and El Salvador, the other "dominos" poised to fall if Guatemala went red. At the time of this meeting, the Tet offensive had just changed the tide of the war, raising the number of US casualties and breaking the moral perception of the war in the American public. The US Empire was in serious crisis. Mr John P. Clark, an Inter American Development Bank representative, agrees with Buen, pointing out the foundational ambivalence in the approach:

> I assume that what IDF is doing is creating a social irritant. American foreign policy can take all kinds of ambivalent courses. If it backs this type of activity vigorously, it is buying itself a lot of trouble unless it is prepared to move to the left (97).

He worries that if we incite social conflict, we have to be willing to support the groups that we attempt to incite in case their attempts at political integration are met with violence. Perhaps he knows something about recent Guatemalan history, in which

peasant claims have been met with outright refusal and even basic attempts at organization have been criminalized as communist. He is pointing to the existence of a division between what USAID the US State Department want for the country, and what the Guatemalan Government wants for itself. Project skeptics thought that attempting to "awaken" social pressures would be leading people to slaughter because US development agencies will be unable to persuade the Guatemalan government to accept the eventual implications of the project, namely opening up their societies to democratic participation from the grassroots, and that this would lead to violence. The critics were prophetic.

Other "experts" disputed Mr. Clark and Mr. Buen's concerns, seeing them as a misguided underestimation of the power of civil action development. Mr Robert Culbertson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Social and Civic Development at the US State Department in the Johnson Administration, made a strong case for their USAID's ability to fulfill the goal of social integration by rerouting social resources:

> [Aid] is unimportant unless it is utilized in order to loosen major domestic resources and that is precisely its role. We are trying now to refine our technique so that we do use foreign aid skillfully enough, so that we have some influence on the allocation of domestic resources in the right places. (97)

Mr. Culbertson, one of the leading military strategies of international development at the end of the 1960s, sees aid as a precise tool, a finesse operation directed by skillful hands. One senses a certain arrogance or overconfidence. Is there any room for error? Who would pay the price for a miscalculation? These questions are irrelevant because, supposedly, the techniques have been practiced and are ready to be deployed. His ally in the conversation, John Wasson, IDF director from Honduras, objects to the use of the term "social irritant" by project skeptics:

> The idea that what we are doing is creating social irritants strikes me as being somehow wrong. We are doing exactly the opposite. We are creating mechanisms for solving problems which reduces irritation, but they are basically

> designed to solve problems at a lower explosion level, a lower level of irritation, than would be the case if these things build up until the whole thing blows up into a revolutionary coup. (101)

He sees the irritant in Guatemala as pre-existing. Although he is a bit vague, the irritant he sees is the revolutionary movement. This is the process he wants to stop. These statements indicate the extent to which it was believed that a lessening of economic and social inequalities would short-circuit the grassroots appeal of communist ideologies. Culbertson and Wasson seem convinced that aid can arrive quickly, effect massive changes and do so with such a precision to release latent social pressure that could explode if left unattended. Advocates saw conflict as inevitable in the current situation. They worried that the violence between the Guatemalan Government and the insurgency forces would inevitably escalate in the absence of such a program. Advocates of the civic action approach viewed it as a slow acting, but sure vaccine, necessary to isolate revolutionary movements and prevent further violence. It is unlikely, however, that civic action supporters thought that it would completely eliminate the need for state violence against counterinsurgency groups did not see it as a replacement for violence. In a letter sent to Assistant US Secretary of State Oliver, by Ambassador to Guatemala Gordon Mein, Mein said that we should accept that "It is a fact of life, therefore, that terrorism will continue to be a part of the Guatemalan scene, at least for the immediate future." And for that reason, he did not understand people who were criticizing the Guatemalan counter-insurgency, taking as "gospel" the grumblings of "a couple of frustrated priests" (Mein 1968). [14]

THE RURAL COOPERATIVE SOLUTION

Understanding the naïve enthusiasm regarding the capabilities of rural development requires a close examination of the technologies at the disposal of these

groups, and the kinds of fantasies of control and visions of progress and corresponding excitement that they generated in policymaking circles. Since the mid 1960s, USAID had been experimenting with cooperative organizations as development implementation mechanisms. Cooperatives were selected for the Guatemalan program because they fit the desires to have an effect on the detailed aspects of everyday life of Mayan farmers. They also fit the way that the program was imagined as an ambitious experiment in "direct" democracy. Conjuring images of collective grassroots enthusiasm, cooperatives were also emblematic of the philosophical shift in USAID concerning targeting the poorest, neglected sectors of the population, whose poverty was conceived of as an unfortunate, but understandable, outcome of their isolation from government services. A regional federation of independent cooperatives seemed perfect for the kind of detailed, finesse operation that was imagined. David Fledderjohn, recalls how:

> It was decided that the organization of the new, direct-membership regional or area-oriented agricultural cooperatives represented the best alternative for the project. A network of local groups also conceived as a way to reach concentrations of farmers in outlying areas and to preserve elements of communication and democratic process in an informal setting (1976, 4).

Cooperativization was seen as breaking the prevailing inertia assumed by development agents to paralyze the rural sector. Through cooperative formation, agents thought that they were planting the seeds for a movement would, once rooted, would flourish and have a long-lasting impact on the form and quality of life in the rural communities. In his final report, Fledderjohn reminisces about how the two Guatemalan field operatives in charge of "sounding out interest in organization" expressed their excitement about the cooperative project by nicknaming themselves "the flamethrowers"(5). This term indicates that agents thought of their role in the highlands as a sort of Promethian quest, giving light to the culturally benighted and inert provinces.

Versatility was also a quality associated with the cooperative structure. The cooperative system was viewed as a delivery mechanism for a laundry list of ideas, inputs, services, marketing strategies, technologies, and coordination:

> In addition to providing credit for inputs such as fertilizer and seeds, the cooperatives also perform a number of ancillary services. Bulk purchases and duty free imports make prices lower. Cooperatives provide marketing information and sometimes arrange for group marketing. They provide technical and financial advice. They help to transport commodities. They maintain farm equipment for use by members. They provide extension services. (USAID 1973)

After "local," "independent" was a project key word. After an initial loan injection, USAID expected cooperatives becoming self-sustaining institutions, using income gained by members' shares to pay for their own operations (Fledderjohn 1976, 51).

But what was wrong the existing cooperative movement? Why were these activities insufficient to achieve the same goals as the RCCP and FECOAR? Was USAID not trying to work coordinate with them and also to provide them financial support? USAID had loaned money to some of these cooperatives in the onset, but quickly abandoned the idea of trying to rescue them because they saw them as inefficient managers, especially as the organization grew larger and the tasks more complex (2-3).[15] USAID and FECOAR agents constantly asserted the failure of FENACOAC cooperatives. David Fledderjohn writes that "more than 100 farmer cooperatives were organized during […] the sixties by persons and programs seeking an answer to the predicament of these rural farmers." However, "the vast majority have failed as business institutions. Accounting records are hopelessley garbled; credits to members have gone uncollected; operating losses have wiped out member equity; controls and auditing have been deficient, to name a few of the problems encountered"(1974, 7). Fledderjohn attributes this problem to several factors about rural Guatemala that made it difficult to apply cooperative principles there: "farms are extremely small […]; farmers have widely

scattered settlements […]; farmers are representatives of an ancient Indian race and culture, they have strong ties of family and community but their contacts with the world of commerce and government are few" (7). Looking for a "solution to the organization and operational dilemmas, Fledderjohn had constructed "new innovation," a "hybrid cooperative institution has been devised to combine the requirements of volume and management of an efficient enterprise, with the flexibility to reach many farmers in scattered small communities in which they live." USAID, with the assistance of Association of Cooperative Development International, hired on as a special consultant for this project, designed their cooperatives strategically to avoid the problems that plagued the previous cooperative systems. Central to this was the establishment of a regional cooperative system with rigorous accountability and management systems, as well as village level organizations (3).[16] Six regional centers were created in Guatemala to organize the USAID led program, one in the east and the rest concentrated in the central highlands. Village level groups would have from 20-40 members. Every couple of weeks, extension agents would work with the groups to teach small workshops and oversee group activities. Groups appointed village representatives, gave themselves names, and met weekly.

"APOLITICAL" DEVELOPMENT

Both USAID/FECOAR and FENACOAC/DC cooperatives wanted to create local organizations of peasants and introduce them to modern techniques of agriculture. More than organization structure, what USAID thought was wrong with existing cooperatives was their political ideology and the type of relationship that they would encourage between local farmers and the state. Beyond high-tech managerial experience, the central difference between the approach of the USAID cooperatives and the existing

autonomous cooperative federation was that David Fledderjohn believed strongly in "apolitical development" (Davidson 1976).[17] One rationale behind this was to "balance [USAID's] support of those identified with the Christian Democrats" who "opposed the government" (Davidson 1976, 14). But "apolitical" development was also central to ACDI's precepts. Fledderjohn saw discussions of development as distinct from politics. This guiding ideology, as well as problems of competition, caused conflict with the existing DC cooperative movement, which saw these as the state's attempt to create its own cooperative movement in order to squeeze out the independents (Brockett 1988, 110). Fledderjohn attempted to avoid conflict by starting cooperatives in areas not already occupied by the DC coops.

Thinking of this program as simply apolitical misses how it intended to instill a certain political norm. It would be more appropriate to focus on the kinds of political thought and behavior it advocated, as opposed to treating it as if it was a political vacuum. The doctrine of apolitical development corresponded to a non-confrontational norm for citizenship. In place of confrontation with the state, the norm was constructive engagement with the state over issues of well-being. Perhaps this can be best described as a move from political "demands" to political "requests." In this vision of apolitical development, the cooperative would function as "A forum or communications system through which information could flow from and to the outside world of commerce and government" (Fledderjohn 1976, 4). This dialogue focused on communicating local desires for development projects to state institutions. Communities would be able to appoint representatives that would communicate their needs directly to government agencies and officials. This program followed a logic of increased visibility. Local desires and concerns, once opaque to community planners, would now be presented in a recognizable form. Agricultural extension agents and local program directors would

instruct community members on how to plan community development projects, such as schools or potable water projects and how to present these plans to state development institutions. Communities were trained how to translate their desires for well-being into concrete development projects, things that the state could, at its own pace, provide. The idea was that increased governmental responsiveness to the needs of rural Mayans would encourage Mayans to opt for non-confrontational relationship with the state.

As much as this is a political opening, it is a limiting mechanism. Apolitical development offers citizenship makes citizenship contingent on specific forms of obedience and subjective transformation. The move to market economics, for example, was openly conceived by policymakers as a kind of "de-indianization" or *mestizaje*. Instead of formulating one's own demands regarding needs and political desires, one should always adjust these according to governmentally provided standards of acceptable economic and political behavior. Mayans who did not adopt these changes were presumably excluded from entry into the nation; or rather, the exclusion of Mayans would then be justified through reference to their refusal to develop themselves. In the end, highly limited and rigorously regulated participation in the national economy and in national politics was conditioned on the adoption of 'modern' economic behaviors and prescribed political behaviors. The flipside of establishing a way of entering into the nation, it created the conditions under which continued forms of exclusion was to be seen as necessary. Stepping outside of this space for legitimate political discourse meant that one had decided to be confrontational, and, thus was ineligible for care from the state, and, worse, eligible for disciplinary intervention.

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These institutional documents exude great confidence. Policymakers expected these programs to have profound effects on Mayan political subjectivity. New

technologies sparked the imagination of policy-makers concerned with how to balance the goals of social stability and continuity with decreased inequality, poverty, and marginalization. The advent of new seeds, chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides were seen as immediate solutions for the food crisis. High yield seeds and fertilizers could triple output. Pesticides would decrease losses. Herbicides would eliminate the difficult work of hoeing weeds, enabling farmers to work more land. Small parcels which were previously insufficient to provide food for the growing rural population, would now be ample. The goal of the cooperative program was to facilitate a massive shift to market agriculture by providing rural farmers access to training, credit, and markets for their crops. Alongside the new technologies, markets and credit technicians trained Mayans how to calculate costs and benefits, and plan and save towards their economic lives and futures. The central themes of sustainability and individual self-sufficiency fit policymaker aspirations for an alternative to social conflict generated by poverty. Solving the problem of famine and land shortage in the highlands would take the major issue away from the guerrilla. Cooperatives were selected as the mechanisms because they mimicked the collective survival strategies rural Guatemalans, mostly Mayans, had adopted to improve their lives under almost impossible conditions.

Cooperatives were also selected Guatemalan program because they fit the desires to penetrate the wild, distant zones of Mayan villages, to be able to exercise a level of control over detailed aspects of everyday life of Mayan farmers. Conjuring images of collective grassroots enthusiasm, open communication, and governmental benevolence, cooperatives were taken as concrete proof of a new, more economical and progressive approach to counterinsurgency management. All the feel of democracy, and all centrally controlled. Cooperative development, they imagined, would allow Mayans to feel, for the first time, like they had a stake in the nation, and were benefiting from progress. New

contacts with political organizations would allow the state to become popularly understood as committed to the wellbeing of the rural Mayan. Policymakers hoped that this new more productive relationship to the state would stem the tide of guerrilla movements that, since the mid 1970s, had begun making inroads among rural Mayans on the issue of land reform.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Fledderjohn was shocked by his own discovery that the impact of the program on the well-being of cooperative participants was nil, or even counterproductive (Fledderjohn 1976, 25-26). The economic benefits of the program for farmers, while obvious to everyone participating, were invisible in a midway study carried out by USAID, which compared participating to non-participating farmers. This report deflated USAID representatives. Admittedly, it had been difficult to find a stable and lucrative cash crop that could be grown on small plots of land with minimal investment. Wheat was the only one that made any sense, but was not a viable product for most farmers. And this study was consistent with an earlier one by USAID Fledderjohn re-examines his methodology and speculates reasons for an inaccurate finding, but he still cannot make sense of it. It also concurs with Warren's assessment of the USAID-ACDI cooperative in San Andrés (Warren 1978, 141-2).

In addition to their dubious effects, their economic insustainability complicated problems with the Guatemalan government that had plagued the program since the beginning, ultimately limiting the ability for the program to attain the goals imagined by USAID and ACDI. Despite the Guatemalan government's role in planning the program, Fledderjohn reports that the government of Guatemala debated whether or not to grant a charter to FECOAR for some time, stalling a year before issuing the permit. He recalled

that there must have been some concern, more than "fumbling paperwork," and he and Chinchilla, the other project director, feared for project's survival, certain that there were "doubts at some levels" in the government (1976; 37). It was finally proved after a government sent two agents to investigate the regional office.

Once legalized, independence was an elusive goal. The Guatemalan government never allowed the cooperatives to function as autonomous organizations. Economic independence, the main factor in autonomy, proved elusive. It was hard to make money on services and further problems with the supply of fertilizers, and the desire to provide them at low cost, jeopardized the economic independence of the cooperatives (38-39). Another factor interfering with the cooperatives was BANDESA. All cooperatives—FECOAR and FECOAC—were undermined because BANDESA was offering loans at subsidized rates far more competitive than cooperative loans, and therefore depriving them of a central source of revenue (Davidson 1976, 41).[18] Fledderjohn laments the final situation:

> There is no denying the fact, however, that the cooperatives operate at the will of the government. They (not only the FECOAR system) are dependent upon BANDESA for debt capital, their operations take place in markets affected by public policy and the cooperatives have for the first time in the history of Guatemala, become instruments of public programs. It is difficult to predict what the future may bring, but obviously the concept of the development of self-sufficient cooperative institutions operating independently and autonomously in a relative free market has been altered considerably from the time the ACDI effort was begun. (Fledderjohn 1976, 34)

Because BANDESA controlled all of the money, the state controlled both cooperatives. It is hard to imagine that this was an accident. The government "mismanaged" BANDESA in such a way as decapitalize the other cooperatives. Fledderjohn recalls that:

> [FECOAR] had an experience in 1973-4 of selling products to members obtained from BANDESA at nearly twice their cost. In 1975, the government agreed to

> subsidize the cooperatives for losses incurred largely as a result of oversupply and sharply declining prices caused in large part by BANDESA imports (37).

In addition to price gouging, in 1974-75, BANDESA overpurchased fertilizers, then dumped them in the FECOAR coops, who had to sell them at a fixed low price, depriving them of their main source of income for capitalization. When the government promised to repay them with subsidies, they were given more excess to sell. Therefore, both FENACOAC and FECOAR exist at the whim of the government. The program was now a tool for state policy. These adverse conditions must have been more devastating for the FENACOAC coops, which did not have financing from the state. Whether by accident or design, hobbling autonomous and USAID cooperatives opened space for DIGESA, the state run cooperative program.

Despite these many misgivings, Fledderjohn's end of program assessment was most hopeful about the emergent forums for political communication and organization. In particular, he was reassured by what he saw as the apolitical idea taking hold among the cooperative participants:

> There are some signs of increased inconformity and aggressiveness in some leaders which is the product of their increased awareness and maturity as representatives of a less privileged constituency. It is difficult to imagine, however, that FECOAR leadership which is predominantly of Indian origin, would opt for a hard-line confrontation with the Guatemalan government, jeopardizing the possibilities for productive dialogue which have been developed in the early years of the institution. If this prediction is valid, it would appear that the FECOAR cooperative network can expect not only a harmonious relationship with the government but also expect assistance which will be needed for survival and growth. (Fledderjohn 1976, 45)

Fledderjohn makes the ethnographic observation of a decrease in anger, or at least its productive rechanneling. He even predicts a "harmonious relationship" will emerge in the near future. The important thing to notice here is what counts for Fledderjohn as "political" and therefore "confrontational." What is specifically prohibited from the

realm of proper, modern political behavior is the alignment with any movement that challenges the legitimacy or the power of the existing government and social order. One can legitimately organize and enter into dialogue with this government, but one can never organize *against* it, nor can one push for demands that this government has declared fall outside of the realm of possibility.

As neutered as this political vision seems, it was apparently too much for the security obsessed and democracy paranoid Guatemalan government to countenance. When the Guatemalan government took control of the program in 1976 they had already undercut the autonomy of many of these organizations. The state felt that the focus on economic integration and advancement for Mayans via autonomous political organizations was seen as too volatile of a message. this became all too obvious in the early 1980s. By 1984, 100,000 rural Guatemalans were members of cooperatives (Handy 1983). In a macabre twist, the military targeted many cooperative leaders and members in the wave of counterinsurgency violence in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Brockett 1988). In addition to being "apolitical" like USAID cooperatives, DIGESA, as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, did away with any notions of autonomy that still pertained to cooperative organizing.

CONCLUSION

The programs actual outcomes deviated sharply from this powerful vision. Studies of productivity and income levels for the participating farmers showed no real variation with non-participating farmers, much to the dismay of the USAID program operatives. Also, they were too little too late to stop the revolutionary movement, which was already underway. As this became evident, the Guatemalan military became more skeptical about the autonomous local organizations, which had gained thousands of

members in a short time. These programs, with all their limitations, were deemed too revolutionary by the paranoid Guatemalan government. In the end, violence and militarization—and not development—ended the Mayan-guerrilla relationship. Their failure in their central mission, however, did not exhaust the programs' significance. For Guatemalan and US policymakers, the cooperative program operated as a kind of transference. It told Guatemalan and US policymakers that the major reforms they either did not want or already believed were impossible, were now unnecessary. Guatemalan government officials, if not as enthusiastic as USAID programs about the autonomous political organizations, were at least exempted from external pressure for agrarian reform. Oddly, the program's founding assumption—that the Guatemalan government would not implement agrarian reform and therefore other solutions must be sought—became a key part of the reason why the Guatemalan government should not *have* to accept reform, and also why the US would never have to pressure them to do it. As is clear, the absence of political reform from the conceptual field of possible alternatives led to a direct encounter between the military and guerrilla organizations and the Mayan communities where they were integrated. It is hard to speculate, but it seems possible that, absent the existence of these programs and the optimism they generated about non-reformist politics, the counterinsurgency program could have taken a different turn. I suggest that these programs might have played an important role in committing US and Guatemalan government policy away from reformist options earlier on, making the conditions ripe for extreme violence of the early 1980s.

Optimism is a powerful, tangible, political force. In this chapter, I have attempted to show how the optimism generated by new technologies shaped counterinsurgency strategy. By closing off discussions of land reform, they normalized the system, and became part of the conditions under which genocide became seen as the necessary

alternative to confront the guerrilla threat. In conclusion, I want to draw a connection between the forms of optimism then, and the present day. We must pause to reflect on the political alternatives rendered invisible by the optimistic discourses that see neoliberal reforms to property law and trade restrictions as effecting economic security and to the consolidation of Guatemalan democracy.

NOTES

[1] The official justifications for the reversal of the agrarian reform were the following: politicized the peasant against the oligarchy; disregard for institution of private property which threatened the loss of foreign investment; the decline in agricultural production, the desire of the peasants to enter the wage economy, and sparking rural discontent. (Melville and Melville 1971, 110)

[2] Melville and Melville write instead that:

> In 1950, the Guatemalan harvest yielded 8,217,000 quintals of corn; in 1952 it increased to 10,711,000; in 1953 it descended to 9,400,000 quintals and then in 1954 to just under 9,000,000 quintals, but still far above the 1950 yield. However, in 1955 the total dropped almost one million quintals from what it had been in 1954, and continued to drop further in 1956.

[3] Arevalo's attempt at colonization had shown that it was incredibly costly and yielded few results.

[4] This same event led to the revolt of a handful of military officers on the November 13th of that year, who decried the agreement as a violation of Guatemalan sovereignty and an act of US Imperialism in Latin America.

[5] The Melville's take this quote from Adolfo Gilly, an Argentinian writer.

[6] Kennedy spoke about the Alliance for Progress for the first time in his inaugural address in 1961:

> To achieve this goal political freedom must accompany material progress. Our Alliance for Progress is an alliance of free governments – and it must work to eliminate tyranny from a hemisphere in which it has no rightful place. Therefore let us express our special friendship to the people of Cuba and the Dominican Republic – and the hope they will soon rejoin the society of free men, uniting with us in our common effort.

[7] They write that, "Dr. James Walker, from the University of North Carolina, a leading expert in the field, predicted that the lands would be swamps within five years if they were given over to agriculture."

[8] They say that:

> Just as had happened in Nueva Concepcion and in La Maquina [the previous colonies], as soon as people heard that lands were to be given out they began moving into the area so as to receive preference. In July 1964, INTA warned that those who, without INTA's authorization, moved onto the lands to be distributed, would be considered invaders and never receive lands. INTA claimed that unscrupulous people were organizing landless peasants to invade the area. In 1965 a UN report on the colonization zone Fray Bartolome de las Casas stated that there were already 475 single-room houses of rustic poles and palm roofs with dam dirt-floors, housing approximately 3,000 people. The majority of the homes had no latrines or baths and all were getting their water from an open stream. Control of malaria was most difficult.

[9] The guerrilla movement included the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces, FAR), a Leninist organization aligned with the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabjadores (Guatemalan Worker's Party PGT), and the Trotskyist MR-13.

[10] For a more detailed description of these events, see also Grandin, Greg. (2004)

[11] For more information about the colonization program in the Ixcan, see Manz, Beatriz, 2004 and Garst, Rachel 1993. *Ixcan: colonizacion, desarriago, y condiciones del retorno*. Guatemala: Consejo de Instituciones del Desarrollo.

[12] In 1956, credit cooperatives were legalized in 5 towns in Huehuetenango: Santa Eulalia; San Pedro Soloma; San Andres Cuilco; Huehuetenango; and San Idelfonso Ixtahuacan. By 1972, there were new cooperatives in Sta. Cruz Barillas; La Democracia; San Pedro Necta; Nenton; San Miguel Acatan; Chiantla; Aguacatan; San Rafael La Independencia; Jacaltenango; San Juan Ixcoy; San Mateo Ixtatan; La Libertad; San Sebastian; and Coatan.

[13] Obviously, this is not unique to Guatemala. Akhil Gupta (1998) notes this as a feature of development discourses in India during the same period. For a thorough and provokative discussion of the way that Malthusian ideas have worked their way into international regimes of governance as well as notions of modernity, see Ronald Greene, 1999. *Malthusian Worlds: US Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis*. Boulder: Westview Press.

[14] In the letter Mein applauds the Guatemalan military on their effective counterinsurgency efforts and warns against a change in US policy:

> There is little the Guatemalan Government or its security forces can do to prevent terrorist actions, and since it is well nigh impossible to know when and where the terrorists will strike, it is extremely difficult to take measures to prevent or meet such strikes. The only remedy, therefore, seems to be constant vigilance and to handle each incident as it occurs, while at the same time searching out the terrorists in the hope of eventually eliminating the problem. This is what the Guatemalan security forces are attempting to do. It is a very difficult problem which requires unpleasant, and at times unpalatable, remedies, and which cannot

be just wished away." He also specifically questions the US support for counterinsurgency in the countryside and reluctance in Guatemala City. In favor of widespread counterinsurgency, writing that, "I frankly fail to see the difference."

[15] Fledderjohn describes the problem with existing cooperative in the following way:

> These organizations, although promoted by people and programs of high intentions and unquestionable faith in cooperative principles, were having serious problems and the incidence of failure was high enough to cause farmers serious doubts about the real value of cooperative organization. The experience of these small, informally run, and feeble cooperatives gave ACDI plenty of evidence that, even with the advantage of resources from AID to "patch up" the ailments of existing cooperatives, this sort of assistance would have only short run affect. The cooperatives were ill conceived to deal with problems of administration, complex service demands of members and requirements of institutional survival such as capital formation, growth, economies of scale and ability to deal with competition.

[16] Fledderjohn describes the organization goals as the following:

> 1) Sufficient area coverage to provide access by some 3,000 to 5,000 farmers. This meant that the cooperative would serve several communities within a radius of 20 miles of the administrative center. 2) With a member base this large, a volume of operations sufficient to achieve economies of scale in administrative features, purchasing and distribution would be possible. 3) Professional hired management, strict standards of control, accounting and handling of money would be absolutely essential. 4) Although the regionals were to be direct (individual) membership societies, the organization of farmers at the village (*aldea*) level would be essential for communications and the delivery of services. Following these guidelines, ACDI conceived the regional, multi-service agricultural cooperatives as the primary institution within which a capacity to provide essential services to farmer-members would be built. Six of these regional cooperatives were planned to eventually serve about 30,000 individual farmer members.

[17] Also see Brockett 1988, p. 110

[18] Davidson elaborates that, "BANDESA competes with the cooperatives by offering small farmers production credit at a rate of 5% as compared to the Federation's 12% rate.

Chapter Five: Beholding DIGESA: Agrarian Modernization in Two Conceptual Systems

The last chapter discussed the reasons behind the Guatemalan government's decision to implement agrarian modernization programs and to introduce green revolution technologies in the western highlands. Its aim was to build an entirely new "way of life," part of which was a new way of seeing the political and a new attitude towards reality in general. Specifically, it wanted to construct a new kind of 'enterprising', calculating, self-disciplined and market-oriented individual, capable of wresting a living from the meager opportunities in a forgotten corner of the national economy. It wanted to penetrate into the everyday economic and subsistence activities of Mayans to create a productive relationship to the nation state. It promised a new form of prosperity on the open market. I hope I was able to convey the vast differences—both ethical and material—between this representation of a utopian political alternative and the desire for political reform at the grassroots.

This chapter explores the way that one state agrarian modernization program—The General Directory of Agricultural Services, (DIGESA)—was implemented locally, as well as the immediate responses of rural Mayans to these programs. DIGESA, the first state-agrarian modernization cooperative development program in San Pedro, arrived in 1978. This was much later than in other parts of the highlands. The DIGESA program had the widest coverage in the highlands and was the main disseminator of green revolution technologies, credit and discourses, and practices of development. Prior cooperatives had emphasized these new technologies and credit, but had a limited reach.

My ethnographic research focused on the DIGESA program by asking the following questions: What pedagogical techniques were used? What central narratives accompanied the implementation of the programs? How did these normalize a particular notion of the self, society and politics along with new agricultural practices? What were some of the ways Mayans responded to different aspects of program pedagogy? Did they like some parts more than others? Did different groups respond differently? Why? How did Mayans who participated eagerly in DIGESA's programs view their participation in relationship to existing political struggles?

In this chapter I examine the arrival the DIGESA program to Los Altenses, a rural Mayan village in San Pedro where I lived for seven months in 2004. The first part of the chapter presents data from several interviews with the local program director, a local Ladino, to describe DIGESA's activities, pedagogical practices, and narratives. Next I examine how different aspects of the program were understood and responded to by Mayan villagers, and how this view shifted in relationship to changes in the chaotic and divisive political situation around the time of its introduction. For this part, I rely primarily on data from a Mayan man who participated in the program since it's inception and worked for many years as village representative. This comparison draws attention to similarities and differences between the frame through which the need for development was conceptualized by the program director and by Mayan farmers.

The program director related of the need for development to a deficiency intrinsic to Mayan culture, which he sees as a bounded unity of backward superstitions and disempowering habits. The goal of development was to replace these backward elements with modern, enlightened behaviors. The village representative's narrative shows how these same discourses of development appealed to local desires to counteract the

perceived effects of colonial domination and social exclusion, and made no recourse to a notion of cultural inferiority.

This chapter provides the basis for the next two chapters. Chapter six examines the longer-term effects of these discourses of development on local notions and practices of self and well-being. Chapter seven examines how these notions of development infused Mayan political organization during the late 1980s and 1990s. Chapter eight focuses on how these notions created new forms of discrimination and new norms for leadership that reorganized existing village hierarchies. Chapter eight also shows how these new hierarchies figure into political divisions, and how these divisions played a central role in the ascendancy of the FRG in the village, and in the San Pedro more generally.

AGRARIAN MODERNIZATION ARRIVES IN SAN PEDRO

DIGESA was not the last development institution to operate in Mayan villages, even if it was the most significant. The most wide-ranging subsequent program was the National Coffee Association, (ANACAFE), a state-funded institution similar to DIGESA, but run primarily by large planters and whose efforts (credit, agronomical skills training, market pedagogy) focused strictly on coffee production. DIGESA's operations ended completely in 1996, when President Arzú privatized the *sector public agraria* along with other state institutions in accordance with neoliberal economic policies. This work had subsequently been taken up, unevenly (and many say haphazardly), by NGOs operating with Guatemalan government or international funds. In San Pedro, the most prominent development institution, and source of discourses about *capacidad* was ASODESI, the *Asociación por Desarrollo Integral*. There were also a host of national and international NGOs such as the Spanish based Intervida, whose yellow and blue backpacks were worn

by children in most of the *aldeas* and in even among Ladino children in the town center. *Asociación* CEIBA, the development organization associated with the newly legalized left also has regular workshops in several villages. Nevertheless, more than any other group, DIGESA's operations, which ran the longest and had the widest coverage, consolidated local meanings of development, especially notions of individual capacity building, *capacidad.*

I learned a great deal about how DIGESA's programs were implemented locally from the former director, Ruben Vasquez. Vasquez, a Ladino from an *aldea* in San Pedro not too far away from the town center and known for its excellent coffee, is the eldest of three brothers, each of whom are considered authorities on the discourses and practice of development in San Pedro. Both of his younger brothers run successful development institution. One implements health and food aid programs, while the other directs an association of coffee farmers. Hence the Vasquez name is synonymous with development. On these credentials his brother who heads up the largest development institution in the town, ran a campaign for *alcalde* in the past election, entering late but gaining a substantial following. Ruben, who was self taught as an agronomist, was chosen as the local coordinator of DIGESA in 1978, and stayed on until it was dismantled by the privatization policies of the Arzu regime in 1996. Although now retired, Ruben is considered the 'don' of development in San Pedro. Most Mayan villagers hold him in high regard and see him as a friend to indigenous people and an ally in the struggle for economic security. As such, he is regularly invited to speak at public meetings where the key theme is development as well as advise different development programs. In the last decade, he has become a very vocal proponent of 'organic' agricultural practices, despite the fact that he spent over a decade introducing chemical fertilizers and pesticides to local farmers, a role that he actively downplayed in our meetings. Ruben is very easy to

interview. He is accustomed to presenting his messages in a dynamic, accessible way with a sense of excitement. In addition to his work in development, he was an *animador*, or a lay preacher, in the Catholic Church for years.

Each time we met for a scheduled interview, Rivas spoke at length, using the well-practiced tone of a teacher. He described the overarching goal of the DIGESA program as that of *"Making the* campesino *the creator of his own development."* To achieve this, agrarian modernization programs were to shore up the shortfalls in subsistence agriculture and to encourage farmers to shift to market agriculture. Trained in Xela as a *guia agricola* (agricultural guide), Ruben described his role as a *"bridge between the agronomists and the entire community."* He thought of his work as not simply introducing people to new agricultural technologies, but to spark a profound change self-perception and behavior. He wanted to teach, *"all the values of a human being,"* values he perceived to be lacking in the communities where he had grown up. He explains:

> Look, we are superior to everything that there is in the world. Of all that exists, every animal, we are superior to them. Because we have intelligence. You have free will to make decisions. Those are the values of a person, what is called dignity. In the Guatemalan law, it says that a person cannot be submitted to trials that violate this. We cannot be humiliated, no one can oblige us by force. I would teach them about their liberty.

His first assignment was as director of the 4S club, which was similar to the 4H club in the US. The four S's were, *Saber* (knowledge), *sentir* (feeling), *servicio* (service) and *salud* (health). He enjoyed being among and teaching the youth, and recounts the effect of these programs on creating a generation of leaders. *"Some were alcaldes, others were in corporaciones, others were great community leaders, others are in the associations."* Afterwards, he moved on to be the director of programs for the older men as well. When

I asked him why it there was a particular need for this message about values in these communities, he was quick to answer:

> What happens is that here in our culture—which is now getting better— there are those sayings, those phrases: 'I can't', 'I'm not capable' 'He can because he is smart.' 'The gringos look down on us.' This mythology exists in the culture. It still exists. If that bird the pixcoy (a type of bird) is going to sing, there's going to be bad luck. For a Mayan this is bad luck. This is a false belief. There's a lot of mythology. I was trying to get rid of that, to improve it. An animal is not superior to a person. A person is superior. I wanted to teach: 'You are capable in your own life. These mythologies do not help a person to develop as they should.

In his view, the presence of the very form of self-respect and thought that he saw was lacking in the local population exactly the quality that made the USA great:

> In another part of the *conscientización* (consciousness raising), we talked about the gringos. What do they do? They go with their own values, they have done so many things, we now know that they went to the moon. And us? What have we done? And you can, because you also have intelligence. We have to make use our values. That's how a person creates a love toward their own development, because they now feel like a person. But this is what is now being lost.

Ruben wove this message in with biblical passages in Genesis where God describes how he made man in his own image, which he recounts as coming as a shock to villagers. Despite this shock, he recalls that DIGESA's programs were quite interesting to the people in the villages.

Observant readers will notice right away that Rivas' descriptions prominently feature several key themes, narratives and metaphors and tropes of development discourse. A teleological narrative of progress, measured by technological accomplishment, places the US at the forefront of development and Guatemala at the end of an inevitable and staged theory of cultural evolution. Mayans are perceived to exist in a pre-conscious state, waiting to be awakened to human values by the pedagogical urgings of the development agent. No positive value is assigned to Mayan culture; it is defined in negative terms, according to what it lacks, which is always development.

Intelligence can only be gained through interaction with these pedagogies. The unquestioned goal of this development is to fashion an Enlightenment-style human subject, capable of using reason to extend their mastery of all matter and creature in the exterior world. Mayan 'culture' is cast as feminine, dominated by ignorance, fear and pessimism—an obstacle to development; it is precisely when these are expunged, and replaced with new forms of subjectivity will Mayans become masculine, or free. Freedom is defined simultaneously as an absence of restraint on individual action made possible by an increase in technical knowledge and as a choice that individuals can make: to be free or to remain enslaved. Interstingly, no mention is made of the prior participation of villagers in the autonomous cooperatives.

These themes are consistent with the way that state planners imagined the programs. However, his pedagogy is distinct from the one that was imagined by the state. In order to make the program narratives about progress and development meaningful to his indigenous neighbors, with whom he has lived his entire life, he makes use of local understandings of Mayan culture common among Ladinos at that time. Mayans are culturally inferior. They are conformists, who need to be awakened to understand that they are equal. Because he is Catholic, Vasquez is a strong advocate of the equality of persons in Christ. For him, however, Mayans have not yet realized their own formation in the image of God. He needs to teach them. For Vasquez, agrarian modernization was one aspect of a larger process of coming to Jesus through rational thought. This is similar to the ideologies of the Catholic Action development programs, of which he was no doubt aware and approving. Some of the rhetorical strategies in his repertoire come from the Santa Teresita, the local FENACOAC cooperative operating at the time. His borrowings from cooperativist discourses will become more evident shortly.

Furthermore, notice that Ruben has little idea of the larger strategic plan being put into operation. For him, nothing could be less about 'politics' than development. Ruben was not politicized by the guerrilla. Most likely this was due to the fact that he is Ladino, and from a heavily Ladino-populated village known for its political conservatism.[1] This common sense relegation of the political to national elections and similar public spectacles makes him the ideal figure, perhaps, to implement the "apolitical" form of development idealized by Fledderjohn and others at USAID and in the Guatemalan government.

Vasquez described how the DIGESA program was organized by village. In order to participate, in DIGESA, interested villagers would form groups of around 20-30 people each. All members, in the adult groups, were men with land. Some villages had up to three groups of this size. Each group had a leader, or representative. Members, or *socios* would attend weekly, or bi-weekly meetings, where they would receive specific training. Most important in the drive to make farmers independent was the adoption of new agricultural inputs, namely chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and high yield variety seeds. Several of DIGESA's programs were tailored specifically for rural women. DIGESA's women's programs focused on food preparation, nutrition, and hygiene. They even appointed women's coordinators in the villages, who would also receive a salary in exchange for their organizing activities.

Practically speaking, becoming the "creator of one's own development" meant two things: first, staying at home and farming ones own crops; second, raising marketable crops. Each is an important part of the teleology of progress narrated by Ruben. Prior to DIGESA, Ruben recalls sadly, Mayans had immigrated to the *fincas* (plantations) on the south coast every year to harvest fruit and coffee on the large plantations. This work paid little, was physically demanding and damaging, and took valuable time away from

farmers' attention to their own crops, which would suffer for various reasons in their absence.

The Santa Teresita cooperative existed alongside DIGESA in San Pedro, but did not have as extensive of coverage in the villages and did not offer the same array of agricultural services or technologies nor as much credit or at the same rate. DIGESA brought the latest in scientific agricultural technologies, including nitrogen based fertilizers, poisons, and herbicides, and high yield seed varieties of corn and beans, chemical fertilizers and pesticides were previously introduced on a much smaller scale. These new inputs could triple the output of most subsistence crops. DIGESA technicians also showed farmers how to best use the fertilizers and how to select the seeds that would produce the largest ears of corn.

Previous cooperatives operating in many areas throughout the highlands bought large amounts of fertilizers to lowered the price for their members, brought them to the communities, and also showed farmers how much to use and how to apply it for the best results. DIGESA did the same, but went one step further to provide fertilizers free of charge on many occasions. DIGESA thereby sped up the generalization of fertilizer use. Like the experimental USAID cooperatives, DIGESA also brought—again *en masse* and free of charge—high-yield seed varieties developed in US laboratories, and trained farmers in their use. Many farmers also used these, but, as Vasquez and others pointed out, their penetration was much less than the fertilizers because there were many places, especially high-altitudes, where the new seeds would not grow. It might seem ironic that these kinds of self-sufficient agricultural approaches, what we might now call "sustainable agriculture" were implemented alongside the introduction of chemical fertilizers, products who have famously led to the dependence among rural farmers on the cash economy (cfa Green 1999).

Another important part of DIGESA's plan to help farmers focus on their home farms was crop diversification, which would enable them to grow non-traditional crops that they could sell at a profit. Before DIGESA, Vasquez recalls, most residents practiced monoculture—another example of their backwardness. Instead of the traditional corn, beans, herbs and squash, DIGESA brought farmers seeds for vegetables that would grow in the local climate, taught them how to plant and care for them, and told them how to market them in different regional centers. DIGESA agronomists planted community vegetable gardens, both to experiment with different crop types, and to show non-participating community members the fruits of working with the organization. With much pride, Vasquez recounts his efforts to bring different kinds of marketable produce to San Pedro from all around the country, each time trying to find ones that would grow in the diverse climates in San Pedro. Apples and plums worked the best.

In addition to these emphases, DIGESA representatives stressed conservation and what they referred to as "appropriate technology." Group members worked together on soil conservation projects, cutting terraces into steep plots of land so that the heavy rains would not wash away the topsoil. Group members shared the hard work of terracing the plots of individual group members. DIGESA paid local associates for their work on the terracing projects. Appropriate technology meant making the best use of what was available in the local environs. They taught farmers how to make and use organic fertilizers out of compost. Community members were instructed to collect any animal dung, fallen branches and leaves and food scraps to add them to shared bins or individual trenches. In this way, the discourses of development distinguished themselves from pre-existing practices, which are associated with a wasteful ignorance of local resources.

Alongside group work projects were also a range of classes, inputs and services aimed to shift farmers towards market agriculture. The program provided low-cost

transportation to take products raised by group members to regional markets. Equally important to the shift to market agriculture was credit. Credit had been available previously through BANDESA, but the bank's coverage was limited and loans went primary to larger or medium sized farmers. Technicians encouraged people to borrow money as part of a larger process of investment in the future. These programs encouraged Mayans to become risk taking subjects, individuals capable of providing for their own well-being by calculating and taking risks, borrowing money against future profits. Program agents encouraged a long-range world-view based in the empty homogenous time of capital.

Practical agricultural techniques were accompanied by training in a number of specific techniques and suggestions regarding ideal ways of organizing and managing money and personal affairs—a new kind of home economics. The central themes of sustainability and individual self-sufficiency were foremost in the pedagogy of market agriculture used by agronomists. These were defined as modern and intelligent behaviors. These themes were presented according to a narrative of self-improvement through *capacitación* training and *superación* (economic advancement) through careful discipline and the calculation of risk. Extension agents showed people how to tabulate their costs and expenses on a monthly basis, to be able to keep track of and manage their expenditures. Investment was taught as an ongoing cycle of wealth accumulation. Money made through selling marketed goods should go to pay back loans, and then should be reinvested to bring greater rewards in the future. Farmers were urged to buy more land to grow more crops for sale. This kind of reinvestment was explained as a way to raise oneself out of poverty. If someone made their own money, and lived off their own land, it was argued, then they would not have to go to the *fincas* and work for the patrons anymore. Ideas of economic advancement were couched in terms of the

economic well-being of future generations, and farmers were encouraged to take their interests into account. Agents told fathers to save their money to educate their children, so that they would become professionals and not have to live off the land. Visions of a brighter, economically self-sustaining and slowly progressive future were a trope of the discussions of market agriculture.

An additional core assumption running through these themes was the value of individual responsibility. The subject of both *capacitación* and *superación* was the individual: people improved themselves and fought to ensure their own future financial success. At first credit was given to all the members of the group, but was done so on an individual basis; and individuals were responsible for making good on these loans. If someone wanted to have enough food, and to be able to break out of poverty, they had nowhere to look beyond themselves and their own willingness to "be responsible" or "intelligent" by undergoing the personal discipline of self-training, savings, and calculation of risks. In fact, individual *capacitación* was promoted as the only track for economic advancement and well-being. I expressed my curiosity to Ruben about what he, as DIGESA representative, told the farmers about the land crisis, given the presence of the revolutionary movement throughout the region at the time. This is an excerpt from our conversation:

> NC: Were talking about an agrarian reform, or was that not one of your themes?
>
> JR: It wasn't one of ours, but it was an important theme. I'm going to give you an example.
>
> (He begins to pretend he were speaking to a farmer in a village)
> Marcos Gabriel Ruiz. Ok. And how many children do you have?
>
> "I have eight"
>
> OK. In how many pieces are you going to divide your land?

"I don't know. Nine?"

Have you thought about this? Where are your children going to live in nine years?

"I don't know"

What are we going to do in 20 years?

(now speaking to me)

It wasn't saying to them "we're going to take the land from him" but to *think*. If your land is small, you've got to *estimar* (calculate) it. You can't burn it. Better production. More sustainable. This was one of my strategies to talk about agrarian reform. Think about the land. Better work and more production. More estimación towards the land.

In this narrative, revolutionary change is not necessary for social well-being. It is a question of individual farmers, using scientific methods, finding the best way to calculate the most beneficial combination of inputs and crops to produce their own livelihood from their individual plot of land. Individual farmers were encouraged to critically examine their own choices and the relationship between these choices with future outcomes.

The program's pedagogy conceptualized development as an individual's choice to submit to a process of "*capacitación,*" seen as the progressive abandonment of behaviors and attitudes seen as backward survivals of an inferior Mayan culture. Here again, explicit and implicit comparisons were made between responsible and intelligent behaviors associated with *capacitación* and "Mayan superstition." In each case, the program agent's pedagogy invited rural Mayan farmers to choose to change their "defective" and "backward" selves, and to opt to align themselves with the modern, to join the forward march of history. The contrast was often expressed with reference to the metaphor of human life cycle, a move from childlike ignorance to responsible and intelligent adulthood. And this was a gendered narrative, with mature modernity

achievable through individual discipline and the formation of a modern subjectivity—each coded as masculine in relation to the 'feminine' of Mayan culture.

In addition to the programs for men, added a few years later, were a variety of programs for women. These were substantially different in their emphasis, which, instead of agriculture focused on hygiene, cooking and, occasionally, marketing locally produced foodstuffs and textiles. Sometimes women would be given chickens to raise, either for food or for egg production. At one point, women in Los Altenses formed a weaving cooperative, where they would put their money together to buy thread at a reduced price. The women's leader, Concepción, told me that one time she and another member of the group made a trip to Antigua in the late 1980s to sell *huipiles*. Unfortunately, after all of that traveling, no one bought anything. *"Sometimes there just isn't any luck,"* she told me.

Working as a leader for DIGESA's coordinator was a deeply ethical endeavor for Vasquez, who takes great pride in his role in bringing development to San Pedro. When I worked with Asociación CEIBA, and living in San Pedro, I became familiar with the heroic role of agronomists and development agents, seen as involved in the important work of improving the life conditions of the people. This demonstrates the "prevalent attitude that development experts understand the problems of target populations in an objective fashion, while the latter fail to see themselves how they 'really are' and therefore lacks the capacity and know-how to exit the cycle of poverty in which they are immersed" (Shepherd 2006, 36). The dominant discourse on development in San Pedro is found throughout the highlands. Especially among Ladinos living in rural towns, and among many prominent indigenous, these conceptions are inescapable—regardless of the political affiliation of the person that you speak to, right or left. Many Mayan farmers participated in DIGESA. Many other institutions followed, focused on similar themes.

APPROPRIATING DEVELOPMENT FOR SUBALTERN STRUGGLE

Prevailing poststructuralist approaches to development would condemn DIGESA's programs. Poststructuralists would highlight the fact that these programs made essentializing assumptions about rural farmers, embraced uni-linear narratives of progress and attempted to "civilize" rural farmers and root out 'cultural' traits seen as pathological (Escobar 1995). They would also criticize the way these programs intended to depoliticize poverty, replacing systematic political economic analysis with progress narrative and a work ethic (Ferguson 1990). But each of these critical interpretations rests on a reduction of farmers' decisions to participate in these programs as effective governmentality, and by extension, as a form of false consciousness. These hasty, broad-based assessments make the assumption that participation in these programs involves a form of 'culture loss', a notion that has been thoroughly critiqued by recent ethnographies for oversimplifying processes of social change, that often involve continuity and re-articulation (Hale 1994, Warren 1998, Gould 1999, Garcia 2005). Furthermore, such dismal conclusions, while helpful for alerting us to potentially insidious effects of development, also reduce program effects to their stated goals. Programs are seen to have a unilateral functionality: we know the outcomes before we start (Moore 1999). Watts (2003) warns that embracing "anti-development", the alternative proposed by poststructuralists such as Escobar, can lead to the uncritical embrace of some incredibly problematic movements, including radical Islam, whose message is predicated on a rejection of western development. The most strident criticism of the poststructuralist approach to development comes from Marc Edelman (1999). He decries the fact that "flesh and blood human beings […] are conspicuously absent in most of the writing by postmodernist critics about 'development'" (8). As such, he argues, these criticisms

ignore specific cases, as well as the forms of inequality that inform local desires for development:

> It is not necessary to favor the conventional indicators employed by the major aid or lending institutions (per capita, GDP, etc) or even to adopt the increasingly problematical "Third" or "First" world categories at all to recognize that hundreds of millions of people are not meeting their basic needs for food, clothing, or shelter (or that alternative measures of this fundamental problem exist […] But what is striking about the postmodernist critics of 'development' is how frequently they exclude from view both the affected people and the relevant macroeconomic and social indicators. They thus end up trivializing the day-to-day experiences and aspirations of those who suffer by either ignoring their grinding poverty, by carping about the bureaucrats and social scientists who attempt to measure it, or by locating it and all efforts to reverse it at the level of an elite discourse. […] a discourse centered approach to power can lead to blanket cynicism about even innovative efforts for change." (9)

Edelman argues for an approach to development that gives priority to material inequalities and less to the problematic discourses through which these inequalities are often expressed and understood by development institutions. He wants to retain the important insights of postmodern critics of development, but with more attentiveness to the desires of real people. Yet, although Edelman's criticism is helpful in understanding the limitations of the way that discourse-centered approaches have been applied to the study of development, he leaves some important questions unanswered. It is unclear how we can focus on macroeconomic material inequalities at the same time as taking cultural difference into account. For Edelman, it is either one or the other. We should ignore the problematics of discursive constructions and focus on local needs. People, regardless of their background, support development; therefore the criticisms of development discourse need to be placed to one side. But is it not possible that marginalized populations have more than simply a positive or negative reaction to development? Desire for development is never as simple as a 'yes' or 'no'; and participation in development programs is often attenuated with severe misgivings. My ethnographic fieldwork in the

village of Los Altenses show a variegated response to programs which were desperately needed.

His insight is that we do not ignore the reality of these desires, and not to think of them as 'invented' by the discourse itself. At times, however, Edelman seems to rely on a distinction between discursive and material impacts, and downplays the material impacts of discourse. More importantly, his valorization of popular desire and need does not address the question of governmentality: In what ways can development programs operate within regimes of governmentality that attempt to reformulate popular desires and channels them into approved and governable spaces? Under what terms and conditions can short term transfers of resources and skills training be used within larger regimes of power that maintain the general inequalities that Edelman so importantly brings back onto the agenda? To answer these questions, it is very important that we pay close attention to even subtle differences between the solutions offered in the name of development, and the desires for development to which these programs are formulated to respond. Often there is a misfit, and one with serious consequences, including many that may not be evident in the immediate context of the development encounter. Here the problem is that forms of resistance and desire for development are idealized as political alternatives, as opposed to thinking of them as context-driven and potentially counterproductive expressions of agency.

RENARRATING DIGESA

The villager in Los Altenses most closely associated with the discourses and practices of capacidad, and with the DIGESA program, is Arturo Bravo. Arturo Bravo is in his early 40s, the son of AC activists in the village. Arturo Bravo has served for the better part of a decade as the head of the community development committee, now

known as the COMUDE community development council pace the COCODES part of the new law of decentralization. Arturo Bravo is also very politically active, and has consistently played a key role in the political movement led by José Antulio Morales. He has never had an elected position of his own, and claims not to want one, but takes great pride in his role in garnering votes for Chepe in the villages. His recent re-assumption of the position as community development leader as well as his role local electoral processes will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter on development and community autonomy.

Arturo Bravo's first contact with DIGESA's was through their youth program, club 4S. Because most of DIGESA's programs, such as terraces and new crops, required the participants to own their own land, DIGESA started this organization for young men. Already at the age of 18, Arturo was eager, bright and charismatic and could already read and write, qualities which led him to be named group representative for the 4S group of 15 young men. He also worked for two years, 1985 and 1986, as the community representative for Los Altenses to DIGESA, a young age to take on this role. Arturo's assumption of the role of village representative was controversial for another reason. Humberto Ruíz, Arturo's great-uncle and about 20 year his senior, was the representative before Arturo when word came from DIGESA that local representatives were to be paid a salary. It would be small, 300 *quetzales* a month, but even that was a quite a significant considering the price of land at that time was much less at the time and that most people in the village never received a salary of any kind. Arturo says that he was chosen for these abilities, and also that Humberto was a lazy leader, who often didn't show up to meetings, or would show up late, and only wanted to take whatever small material benefits he could from being the local representative, and was not as committed to the mission of the program. In Humberto's version of the story, Arturo ambitiously and

selfishly seized on the opportunity to steal the salary. He went to the office in the town center to petition to be named representative instead of his uncle on the grounds that he, unlike his uncle, had gone to school and could read and write, and that these skills made it more reasonable for him to be the leader. Whatever the validity of either version, the position was awarded to Arturo who also received the salary. As we will see shortly, this shift in program leadership during the period beginning in 1984-1985 would turn out to be crucial years for training of leaders in the DIGESA program.

Arturo Bravo describes his experience with and impressions of DIGESA in terms very similar to those outlined by Vasquez. Like Vasquez, Arturo Bravo recollection divides the time before and after the arrival of DIGESA as the difference between knowledge and ignorance. Yet his narrative is different however; and these differences seem to stem out of a different perception of "development" rooted in a critical analysis of the circumstances in which, he, like other rural Mayans in San Pedro, confronted in the 1970s:

> Because a person doesn't know anything. Before wasn't the same as it is now. There is more capacidad of what one can do, that someone knows something. Before, there was no way of becoming capacitado. And also at that time [when DIGESA arrived], we were very enclosed, we didn't have very much liberty. The problem we had—problems always arise!—is that they didn't allow groups to organize. Before the same people begin to criticize, that you're, whatever, like guerrillas.

Arturo views *capacidad* as knowledge that imparts the knower with the ability to act, knowledge that previously did not exist. DIGESA represented the possibility of becoming a different kind of person, more free, more capable. He sees a net increase in freedom. The phrasing "because one doesn't know anything" is the phrase Arturo uses to refer to the time before the arrival of the DIGESA program. Arturo views development as a way to undo, at least in part, the effects of a colonial regime of power on local ways of life.

Arturo speaks directly to the forms of enclosure mandated by the fact of the armed conflict. Like Ruben's narrative, Bravo's links knowledge with power. Yet Bravo's conception of the need for capacidad, the sense of lack that motivated him and other villagers to continue participating in the program, differs substantially from Rivas' in one important respect: their conceptions, at least at this time, of this prior lack were not based on something intrinsic to Mayan culture. The critical assessment of Mayan cultural backwardness—so prevalent and pronounced in Vasquez' telling—is absent in Bravo's version. This will, as we will see, change over time. When DIGESA arrived, however, villagers perceived their needs as generated in the first instance by the social exclusion of indigenous peoples; their lack of access is a symptom and a mechanism of their social exclusion. This is similar to the AC discourse on development.

In addition to countering these forms of imposed ignorance, and elaborating on his point about the military imposed enclosure, Arturo recounts villagers' perception of DIGESA as a clearly antagonistic, but safer, alternative to militarism:

> There were groups of people in favor of the army, against the guerrilla, and others with the guerrilla. We were threatened in the group, by the military commissioners. They carried me off to the zone. But the institution DIGESA helped us to avoid that. For being leader they demanded that I go to the zona (regional military base). But DIGESA helped me. I was a minor. It was always like that. I defended myself. It has to be born in myself because I am a minor. We went with the coordinator of DIGESA. They gave me a notification so that they authorities would know. There was a conflict between DIGESA and the other part of the state, militarism.

Arturo is speaking here, of course, of the years directly after the most brutal wave of military assaults. DIGESA representatives even helped advocate on Arturo's behalf in front of the military. It is a testimony to the strength of villagers' convictions that so many opted to participate in these programs despite the fact that they risked confrontations with the military as a result (confrontations often brought on by the

actions of their own neighbors!). Nevertheless, perceptions that DIGESA was linked to the guerrilla led many villagers, already opposed to the guerrilla, to oppose the program on the same grounds. In Los Altenses, opposition to DIGESA, like opposition to the guerrilla movement, was most pronounced among villagers whose leading male family members were involved in contracting labor for plantations on the south coast and were military commissioners (spies for the army). That these individuals were also evangelicals did not seem to be important for the decision of whether or not to participate in DIGESA as were the political distinction, especially as these same opponents became interested in themes of development after the war. The elements of the program that led some villagers to associate the program with the guerrilla, and to oppose them, were the same elements that led other villagers to have such an enduring interest in them. This was not because they thought they perceived these two to be the same—they laughed at the naiveté of such associations—but because there was a similarity, in their eyes, *in terms of their own goals and struggles*. It was, after all, engagement in a pre-existing struggles for development that informed Mayan villagers' positive perceptions of the guerrilla movement, not the other way around.

Beyond ideological opposition and fear, I discovered several other reasons why villagers decided not to participate in DIGESA programs. Many thought that the group's activities—at least in the beginning—were a waste of time, a distraction from other work. Others simply did not like to work in groups, and were accustomed to doing their own farming. Distrust of the state—even among many of those opposed to DIGESA's politics—was also a factor. Rumors spread throughout the villages in San Pedro about the land terracing, soil conservation programs. After improving the value of the land by terracing, many villagers feared that Ladinos or the government would then come in and steal their land.

Despite these different reactions to the DIGESA program among villagers—a reaction heavily over-determined by the presence of the military—those who did participate did so eagerly. The DIGESA program was able to keep their curiosity peaked by offering courses on a number of topics of interest, each one focused on improving a small aspect of economic life. After listing the range of technical skills imparted to DIGESA associates, Bravo exclaimed: *They trained us in so many things!* Bravo further recalls that in the early sages of the program the most popular aspect of the program by far was credit:

> Vasquez would come by weekly. When he realized that we were well organized we began to look for credit. We went to FEDECOCA. We wanted to *ampliar* (make it bigger) but we had to no resources for seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, and fungicides. We had the luck of getting a credit. Vasquez did everything. We all had a credit of Q100, the same as today would be about Q2000.
>
> They always helped us. After we had been organized for 15 months, every person, they gave us an individual credit. Me personally, after 15 months, I had Q300. Three times. I bought all the fertilizers and seeds. My mother sold them in the plaza. Q200 of profit, pure money. We grew little by little, each one. […]
>
> They began to get credit guaranteed. They would take out a loan. Before this was BANDESA. Now it's BANRURAL. The people got organized, took out a loan. Two people put up the titles to their land. If you didn't pay your credit, the bank would take it over.

Arturo's estimation of the current value of the money offered in loans at that time shows how significant of funds these were. They did not simply allow villagers to generate revenue from new crops; they were especially valuable given the lower price of productive land. Whereas in 1984, a *cuerda* of coffee land cost approximately Q300, today the same plot would go for Q5000! This provides contextualization why so many villagers saw the form of development offered by DIGESA as an important part of their struggle for advancement. In those days, the risks associated with credit, while acknowledged and feared by those who did not participate, had never become a reality.

The immediate benefits of credit far overshadowed the potential risks. What leaps out in Arturo's narrative, the most important thing, was not the fact of credit itself, nor the possibility of planting and using scientific technologies. Nor was it the desire to reconstruct a failed self out of a primitive, inferior Mayan culture. Rather, most impressive is the way that participating villagers imagined DIGESA as a possible way out of poverty, and to combat the effects of their conditions of social marginalization. It was not a perfect solution, but a slow process whereby individuals could eke out a more stable existence, one that gave them a little more freedom than was previously available. It gave them skills, little tips that, if practiced together, would allow them spaces to be independent, to be "responsible."

There is other evidence in Arturo's narrative that local lack of development was seen as an effect of poverty and political exclusion, not as an intrinsic condition, regardless of what these discourses meant to policy planners or local representatives. One point of divergence regards the way that Arturo characterizes the fact that few Mayans received educations in the previous generation:

> Before like I said our fathers didn't let us go to school. It was for lack of money. And because before our fathers thought that going to school is a waste of time, one that was going to bring more poverty. Through [DIGESA], the technical agents that came and capacitated the people and counseled them to keep studying.

While the attitude towards the previous generations' non-interest in capacitación through schooling is sympathetic: there is notably less tolerance in his narrative for people who decided not to follow this new path. I think it is significant. Arturo Bravo sees the prior generations' economic fears as well founded. Previously, with little opportunities outside of farming and going to the coast, farmers had no reason to believe that there were reasonable alternatives.

Arturo's narrative of the need for development among Mayan villagers makes complete sense when considered in relationship to the Guatemalan state's development policy towards rural Mayan communities. The Guatemalan state did not promote schooling for rural Mayans, or any other kind of skills training, because of the pervasive fear of what would happen if Mayans become educated or economically self-sufficient. (Taracena 2005). Guatemalan state, despite rhetoric of *mestizaje*, actually promoted a dual track of development that left Mayans out of state resources. The goal was, ostensibly, to keep a class of Mayans as Indians as productive labor for the plantations. This seriously calls into question blanket criticisms of development as governmentality. Even if development caused *mestizaje*, a point which has little empirical proof; wouldn't *mestizaje* be better than colonial domination, especially if those were the only two options?

Arturo's narrative indicates that villagers in Los Altenses felt like they were being presented with two options: become capacitated or remain in poverty. Possibilities for change, for the alleviation of poverty through DIGESA were now a concrete reality, proven by profits made through credit, through the ability to market new crops, through simply knowing more. This was viewed as a collective effort to end poverty. But the manner of participating in the struggle was in an important way different from previous struggles: each person had to internalize new norms and learn how to work in a new way. Accumulation of knowledge was crucial. It was not the amount of land that one started with, but their ability to calculate it, to take advantage of it in the most efficient, scientific way that would lead to success.

SUPERACIÓN AS A LIVED REALITY

State-led agrarian modernization programs, combined with Mayans' desire to change their life conditions, paid off visibly, and did so in a relatively short period of time. Arturo remembers this process clearly, making it clear that this was a defining moment in his life. He narrates it with great pride:

> What they did was to begin to criticize the people who were organized. [They would say that the participants] didn't know anything, that they were wasting time, and, what's more, they don't want to work. [group members] were mistreated. They were shameless. What they had in their minds […] they already had the custom of going to the coast to work with the people to gain their *centavitos* (pennies). But they don't think of the future. They thought that just how they were they had to go on being all the time, but it was not so. Now the people that were working directly in the group already had their vegetable gardens. Maybe something always happens, there's a sickness. But there are your *centavitos*. Now there are savings. They [non-participants] were sad afterwards. Sometimes a sickness hit them and they didn't have anywhere to get money to the point that they had to sell their own lands. This is the cause that there was. Now the people were organized and they are the ones who have children who are professionals. Those that did not continued the way that they were.

Over a period of a several years, the opportunities for development presented by DIGESA proved to be a viable escape route from a longstanding form of predatory market exploitation. Arturo explained:

> The goal of this is development. Before no one knew anything about a family vegetable patch. Afterwards, we saw the result. It helped us. Wherever one seeks development, with the little that one has, there goes ones little pennies. Before, all the people went to the coast, to the finca. In this time, when the group formed, this [trend] went down. Everyone would do their work and would sell there [he gestures towards the market] and the money would come.
>
> There was no need to go to the coast. Only the people who didn't like to work in a group continued to go to the coast. But those that got organized saw another reality. A person analyzed well what is development. There was development in the community. We all know what a vegetables are. There was advancement superación. DIGESA helped a lot. Not to get out from under poverty all at once but they helped us a lot.

He continues:

> Everyone said that through this, a person is now responsible. They begin to work. Something is achieved, like this in group. According to what we realized, in the group. The *tecnico* helped the people get out of poverty. Even if we have just a little land, we can still have something. Maybe not a big quantity, but more or less something to maintain our families. So that our families don't keep suffering. That we're not having to put up with hunger. That we don't walk around without clothing. Little by little the people learn how to work. […]

The economic effects of these programs on farmers' lives were not immediately visible, but were probably fairly positive (Annis 1986, 33; Green 1999; Smith 1990).[2] The success of these changes was only one factor in a small, but significant and noticed economic boom for many villagers that took place after the war ended. The most important was coffee prices. International coffee markets were stable since the end of the 1970s in Guatemala; and production slowed dramatically during the violence in 1981 and 1982. From 1983 to 1987, however, coffee prices soared, almost doubling in 1985. The second factor was credit. Farmers who were given increased access to credit through DIGESA and similar programs, especially ANACAFE, were able to purchase land and covert it to coffee, or buy land already planted with mature coffee plants. Third, land prices were still low, about 100 *quetzales* per *cuerda* fully planted with coffee. These low prices reflected the relatively small population size in villages at that time—almost half of what they are today. They also reflect a time when 1 quetzal was equal to the value of 1 dollar. Today the same land would cost Q5000, more cash than most farmers see in three years of coffee sales, especially when input costs are subtracted. The fourth factor was chemical fertilizers, which, especially when applied with the help of technical expertise, increased production of coffee significantly, up to three times. The effectiveness of these inputs had not yet slowed by this time. Fertilizer prices went up steadily, but increased output meant that these costs were still acceptable. Even if these

factors were more significant, it must have seemed that these programs were responsible for the results. Indeed, in Arturo's memory, many villagers saw their efforts at *superación* pay off in a substantial improvement in their lived conditions. Even without taking into considerations whatever gains villagers might have made in those years from growing vegetables for local markets, coffee itself provided ample reasons to believe in the promise of prosperity from market development. Of course, as Arturo reminds us, not everyone caught this train. Only those who were willing to internalize certain norms regarding agricultural technique, economic risk taking associated with borrowing and investing, and the various forms of personal discipline necessary to see a crop from planting to harvest and sale.

The passage of the worst of the violence and the establishment of the civil patrols brought, after a couple of years, a reversal in some villagers' willingness to participate in DIGESA's programs. Arturo Bravo describes how members from the families who had previously not participated in DIGESA's programs due to fear about their political orientation began to show great interest in *capacitación* after the Peace Accords:

> [the Lopez] realized that the people that were with DIGESA were doing better things. It's not in vain that they organized. We were always looking for development. It is worth the trouble to work with them. They began to work with DIGESA. The program ended. [the Lopez] began to teach each other. They asked the Ruiz. They did not want to teach each other. I can't understand. On the other hand, the Bravo family, we had more confidence with the Lopez, even though they were critical [of DIGESA]. They changed their minds and formed an alliance. When the [political parties] leaders came, well, we were organized, and that's how we learned all that. Alright, well, we're going to sign our names. Between them, when the national reconstruction came I asked for a form to fill out all the requirements and they delivered it to me. That's when the Lopez got organized. They also received their *viveres* (food assistance). Because we gave the *mano de obra* (community labor) to make the road. We worked. We sent a solicitation to DIGESA so that they would give us *viveres*. There [the Lopez] saw that DIGESA could work. That is where the Lopez saw that the Bravo family had all the *capacidad* to *gestionar* negotiate whatever project, to find whatever kind of

> help. It's worth it to unite with them. In that way, we joined hands. There was unification. We the family, we didn't say here, apart, are the Bravo, the Ruiz.

The Catholic Action participants were the first to get involved with DIGESA and the most enthusiastically, just as they were more likely to participate in the DC cooperative. But they were not alone. They were joined by other Catholics, from families that were later converts to the Catholic Action movement. Many of them were less active in the church activities at the village level. None of them played in the Church band or had been *animadores*. They also had less land than the other families. Their interest in DIGESA was more closely related to their political convictions, shaped by the revolution, than the new Catholicism. Evangelicals were not interested because they saw the programs as associated with the guerrilla and therefore dangerous. Later on however, the Catholic Action villagers formed a religious alliance with the evangelicals.

A SILENT NORM: DEPENDENCY

There was an additional aspect of DIGESA that did not fit within the narratives of self-reliance and capacidad, yet was nonetheless crucial to Mayan villagers attraction for the program. In what came to be a regular practice, DIGESA provided basic resources, mostly foodstuffs like cooking oil, rice, and cereal—all free of charge. These were known as *viveres*. This had been a governmental policy before, but never on such a large scale.[3] Strangely, DIGESA, despite its rhetoric of self-reliance and individual prosperity through hard work and the application of modern scientific techniques to farming was also involved in providing direct transfers of resources to community members. Program participants were given many free inputs related to the community plots, from fertilizers, pesticides. *"There were a lot of gifts for the farmers,"* Vasquez remembered. Vasquez never knew why there was so much free, and surmised that perhaps it was a way of the

US backers of creating a market for their products. After the harvest of the communally held plots villagers would divide the food itself, three to five different crops, most of which would be sold, but some of which they would eat immediately, together. Sometimes, there was in excess of 30 *quintales* (1 quintal = 100 lbs) per participant, which was a lot for community members. All the participants would provide is the *mano de obra* Vasquez recalls that the men would call their wives, who would come and make a meal for all of the program participants. Villagers referred to this as these harvest celebrations as pleasant affairs, which the villagers came to refer to as the "day of accomplishments." In Arturo Bravo's memory, *"Everyone was happy."*

Well, almost everyone. On most occasions, *viveres* were made available only to program participants. Over time, these were distributed to all villagers. When only participants received them, others often became jealous. Participants saw those who missed out as only having themselves to blame, given that participation was open to all interested villagers. It is now common for villagers to receive direct assistance from the government, mostly food assistance. Chapter nine will elaborate on some of the longer-term political effects of these programs.

CONCLUSION

Mayans in Los Altenses used program resources and narratives that were understood to further their existing struggles for economic security and equality, and, at least initially, ignored elements that did not match their interests. Mayans selectively appropriated these discourses based on their own perception of needs, their own estimation of possible risks and rewards and their own understandings of history. That not all Mayans responded in the same way indicates internal debates about goals and methods; but these debates also reveal shared goals beyond disagreements.

This close examination of DIGESA's implementation further disrupts rationalist conceptions of policymaking as fiat by showing the vast distinction between ways that programs are imagined, and ways that they are put into practice on the ground. Ladino local program representatives drew upon a body of racial folklore, as well as religious understandings, in their explanations of program objectives to rural Mayans. It also provides additional insight regarding why and through what processes developmentalist discourses became dominant among rural Mayans. By calling attention to the conceptual sieve and forms of desire for improved living conditions shaping Mayan responses to DIGESA's programs, this chapter revises current anti-developmentalist perspectives that equate development with governmentality, despite what the stated aims these programs might be. Mayans who responded well to DIGESA's programs did so because they saw their goals as consistent with their political struggles. I also attempt to read Mayan responses to DIGESA serve as a sort of diagnostic of their political understandings and desires in that period, as well as to understand the implications of development in relation to existing forms of community authority. One element that stood out in this story, and that seems to run counter to our expectations, is that Catholics, and not evangelicals, were more amenable to modernization and development, if only for the political meanings that were attached to it when it arrived.

NOTES

[1] Several people I spoke with described his aldea as one where the least amount of guerrilla activity took place during the war. They were also the most pro-PAC.

[2] Annis cites AID studies of cash cropping with chemical fertilizers that indicated a fourfold increase in farmer incomes (Annis 1986, 33). However, David Fledderjohn (1976) writes that these same studies indicated no overall economic improvement in the farmers. Is it possible that AID published a doctored version of their study in order to maintain support for the cooperative program? Carol Smith (1990) and Green (1999, 46-47) describe the green revolution as a period of economic boom. At the beginning, there was low input cost and high yield. Later outputs dwindled and prices for inputs rose, as

did parasitic infestations. But this decline did not happen sharply until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when fertilizer prices went through the roof. Farmers, whose land needed the fertilizers to be even marginally productive, were forced to keep buying in. By this time, many farmers had achieved a relative level of economic security.

[3] In the late 1960s, the government created INDECA, which was part of ICTA. INDECA was in charge of food supplies, mostly basic grains. They would store basic grains, which they bought when prices were low, to distribute to the people in times of crisis—either when there was a shortage or when inflation made food too expensive for poor peasants to purchase. DIGESA regularized this practice.

Chapter Six: *Nos falta capacidad*: Developing New Values and New Selves

> Indeed the very idea, the very possibility of a theory of a discrete and enveloped body inhabited and animated by its own soul—the subject, the individual, the person—is part of what is to be explained, the very horizon of thought that one can hope to see beyond.[…]Our inquires would pursue the lines of formation and functioning of an array of historically contingent 'practices of subjectification', in which humans are capacitated through coming to relate to themselves in particular ways: understand themselves, speak themselves, enact themselves, judge themselves in virtue of the ways in which their forces, energies, properties, and ontologies are constituted and shaped by being linked into, utilized, inscribed, incised by various assemblages.
>
> Nikolas Rose. Inventing Our Selves. (1996, 172)

The last chapter described the way that some rural Mayans responded to state cooperative development programs, specifically program pedagogy and the central organizing narratives. In this chapter, I examine how discourses and practices of *capacidad*, individual capacity development, have taken hold, calcified, and reorganized the conditions of possibility for subjectivity in Los Altenses. More than any other program before or since, DIGESA consolidated notions of *capacidad* for Mayan Sampedranos. This chapter explores what *capacidad* consists in for rural Mayans. How do these new values, narratives, conceptions and practices suffuse the social and political lives of Mayan villagers? How do differently positioned Mayans appropriate, internalize or resist these discourses? What spaces for possible forms of being human do they open and close? How are these spaces gendered and racialized? How do they articulate to desire? What is at stake in referring to these new selves as "modern"? By living for an

extended period of time in one village, I became aware of a multiplicity of ways that villagers incorporated notions of development and *capacidad* into the warp and weft of their everyday lives. *Capacidad* has become an important way for people to think about who they are and to create and inhabit a meaningful social world. Instead of attempting to deconstruct *capacidad*, to show how it is based on a notion of absolute difference that collapses in on itself, I want to examine its poetics, the more or less shared rules that govern how the term, and its correlates, operate to mark certain kinds of subjects as possessing, or lacking, a particular kind of quality or status (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

Discourses of *capacidad* have generated a new poetics of self-making by rearranging the central narratives and practices through which people construct their experience of the self and the world. In speaking about sense of self, I am concerned with how one identifies socially, how one conceives of who one really is, personal habits and beliefs, including their notions of intelligent, moral or normal behaviors and the forms of ethical relationships that one cultivates with ones' self and with others. Deeply related to the self is a notion of well being. By *well-being*, I refer to conceptions of the material goods one needs to survive and be comfortable. It also includes the practices through which these means are procured. I am particularly interested in describing the emergence of a new kind of self-awareness, a new kind of attentiveness to self that takes the improvement of capabilities of that self as an ongoing life project. After *capacidad,* development now entails a subject-making component, a set of practices of self mastery and related forms of knowledge based in these aims. I argue that these discourses and practices of self-fashioning and self-management, despite their uneven adoption, fostered a new norm for self and a new way of establishing the relative value of persons.

This is something new. In the traditional community hierarchy, status was granted to certain men based on age. Many have described increasing economic stratification

among Mayans, in some cases beginning in the late 19th century (Grandin 1999, McCreery 1994). Others have discussed the intensification of class divisions with the advent of cash cropping, which ultimately led individuals to challenge community hierarchies and cargos, in large part because of the extent to which these structures inhibited the accumulation of personal wealth and maintained Ladino dominance (Falla 1978, Brintnall 1979). Grandin (1999) argues that urban K'iché sided with the counterrevolution in 1954, helping to consolidate power for the Castillo Armas regime. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that people thought of themselves as being substantially different types of persons, possessing different personal qualities and status, based on the extent of individual subjective transformations and forms of self-mastery offered by institutions (Anagnost 2004). Ricardo Falla offers extensive observations of the traits and characteristics of a new merchant class in San Antonio Ilotenango, Quiche, many of them leaders of Catholic Action. He describes new patterns of consumption including increased interest in leisure items, luxury goods, especially associated with dress and personal hygiene. His descriptions are organized on class strata, based on levels of available capital. Nowhere in his extensive categorizations does Falla mention the term *capacidad*. This was not part of the lexicon at the time he was working as a priest in the town, and taking ethnographic fieldnotes. Fifty years later, this term is one of the most common ways that Mayans distinguish between people and identify.

As was foreshadowed in the last chapter, discourses of *capacidad* appeal so widely among rural Mayans today because they have generated new possibilities for economic advancement and new forms of pleasure based on self-consumption. They have also to increased the status of Mayans *vis a vis* town Ladinos. Instead of replacing prior discourses and conceptions of agriculture or self, I show how villagers blend development discourses and practices with supernatural or non-scientific explanatory

framework, as well as alternative forms of identification. It is not necessary to give up being Mayan to become capacitado; but this does not mean that nothing changes. My analysis suggests that state discourses of *capacidad* have transformed prior conceptions of development that existed in Mayan communities and that, in many cases, animated collective political struggles in the 1960s. At the outset, I want to make clear that I have no pretensions that this is universal for all Mayans—although I suspect it is widespread in the highlands—or that I have done a 'complete' job of describing realities for Mayans in San Pedro, or that such a description is either possible or desirable. This chapter will also serve as background for my analysis in subsequent chapters of how these notions fit into local political processes.

NEW WAYS OF THINKING THE 'SELF'

Today Mayans use a wide variety of 'development' categories to talk about themselves and about other villagers, and other Mayans in general. These are a problematic that is being worked through, a way of "making sense of things" (Stewart 1996). Most significant perhaps is a clear distinction between villagers who were 'capacitated' and those who were not. Some people were labeled as "not wanting to develop." Along with these were the *superados*—people who had "already made it" economically. In what follows, I will provide ethnographic examples of people who either identify as or are identified by others, each of these categories. Ethnographic descriptions of these "figures" exemplify the salience of these *capacidad*-generated categories in people's lives. These representations are "social facts," malleable and culturally constituted, but which cannot be simply wished away. These descriptions demonstrate that these are categories are not bounded and self-identical, but highly interrelated and mutually dependent. They constitute one another in a relay, helping to

form a complete and coherent reality. Since its emergence, this reality was tangled up with constantly regenerating affective formations, narrative structures, ingrained habits, forms of identification—the material of always-unfolding social relations and political struggles.

CAPACIDAD

Capacidad, which translates roughly to capacity or ability, is a blanket term commonly used by rural Guatemalans—both Mayans and Ladinos—to refer to a person's level of development. There are two major senses in which the term is used. In the first, the term refers to an individual's schooling: the ability to read, write and do basic math. A second sense of *capacidad* connotes the skills and knowledge about particular technical tasks received through involvement with institutions and technical experts. The difference between capacitated and less capacitated as an farmer, for example, is based, roughly, in the extent to which one is seen and sees one's self as a fluent practitioner of modern agricultural practices, as defined by DIGESA, or by some other institution staffed by agronomical experts. The notion existed before DIGESA. It was part of the assumed biological difference between Mayans and Ladinos—Ladinos had it, Mayans did not. Versions of the term were probably introduced along with AC programs and in many of Guatemala's evangelical religious groups.[1] But I think DIGESA, along with other cooperative development and agrarian modernization programs, added to its meaning, and consolidated an authoritative understanding of the term, which they made available to a large number of people, regardless of religion. Less often the term is used to refer, less specifically, to a particular outlook on the world and a way of carrying and managing one's person. The ways of being *capacitado* are mutually independent: a person does not have to be educated in a school to be considered *capacitado*, although it might help you.

And, obviously, they are not exclusive terms because one can be capacitated in all three ways at once. In every usage, but especially in the second (capacitaded vs. uncapacitated) it is a relative term in that each person can be located on a particular location on a neutral scale, with, supposedly, infinite gradations. It is important that the scale applies to all people: Ladinos and Mayans alike. This universality is an important part of why it was interesting to Mayans in the first place: attaining capacidad meant being equal to Ladinos. *Gringos*—not an unimportant figure in narratives of capacidad!—are universally assumed to possess even more *capacidad* than Ladinos. I am particularly concerned here with the first two—capacitated and un-capacitated; but will discuss all three meanings of the term in these examples.

Yet despite the prevalence of these discourses of development and *capacidad*, only a small number of individuals—small as a percentage of the entire village—became seen as having truly attained a high level of *capacidad*. To be considered *capacitado* (past tense) a complete high school education was not a requirement, as this had been unavailable to most men of the previous generation. But literacy—the ability to speak, read and write in Spanish at a basic level or better—was almost always necessary. Those that have attained a high level of *capacidad* are usually well-known, as they occupy leadership positions. *Capacidad* is—as is obvious from in most senses I've just described—deeply wrapped up in what it means to be a man, or, should I say, with dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. This grows out of and reinforces the tendency in rural Guatemala for parents to favor the education of their male children over the female, especially given the financial inability to do educate all children. There is a sense in which *capacidad* is a route to gender equality. Being *capacitada* allows a woman to speak and act with authority in spaces and on matters that have historically been reserved only for men. Yet, all other things being equal, the *capacidad* of

capacitated women is never considered equal to that of capacitated men. And even in these cases when women are more *capacitated* than men, women's ability to lead was limited to other women in the village. Only men were considered viable leaders for the entire community. To expand our knowledge of what it means to be *capacitado*, I will provide an ethnographic sketch of another man I came to know in Los Altenses who embodied these norms: Juan Jiménez.

JUAN JIMÉNEZ

Juan is a good friend and neighbor of Arturo Bravo. He was present in the front row when I asked permission from a village meeting to come and live and research there. He looked me straight in the eye with a knowing expression. Juan is relaxed, and not at all timid to speak to people from outside the community, as is often the way that Mayans approach with outsiders. At the time of my fieldwork, Juan was the head of the *Padres de familia* (parents) committee, whose job it was to facilitate communication between the villagers and the director and staff of the village school, who were almost all Ladinos from the town center or from Huehuetenango. Juan, in his late 30s, was originally from another *aldea*, but had married a woman older than himself from Los Altenses and settled there in the house of her father, who possessed a great deal of land and was now quite elderly. Juan has inherited a great deal of land for coffee and corn from his father-in-law, a man who had himself participated in the earliest village development committees. In the years prior to my arrival, Juan had worked on several committees, and was currently involved in the most prominent development institution in the town ASODESI.

Juan and I spoke on several occasions, many formal and others informally. I enjoyed his quick wit and somewhat irreverent attitude, and he seemed to like to listen to my perspectives. With these ingredients, we became friends. One of the first things he

told me when I met him was that he had taken several courses with ASODESI and currently worked for them as a health promoter. He also mentioned on several occasions that he travels a lot in different *municipios* because of his work as a health promoter. Speaking about content learned in specific courses with development institutions in hopes of gaining particular titles was standard fare in my conversations with community members who had earned such credentials. Most of the people who had been trained in such a manner, Juan especially, were more keen to speak to me than most, and befriend me. They wanted to be associated with someone who they immediately assumed to possess a demonstrably high level of *capacidad*. Still, at times Juan, and many others, would be too busy to humor me, as I was a very low priority.

When I met Juan at his house on one morning for a scheduled meeting, his wife told me that he was around back in a field behind the house. I went down the trail not far to find him. He was there, expecting me, in what appeared to be a recently tilled empty field. One friend he met grows papaya, and told him how to make money from it. Juan wants to grow Hawaiian papaya because they are smaller and sweeter tasting and also because, hopefully, they will grow in Los Altenses. *"I cut all the coffee plants down. My neighbors, the people here, they thought it was crazy. But they do not understand. Now I don't want anything to do with coffee."* Juan is gambling, in an educated and informed way, that papaya sales will allow him to make much more than he would have made simply growing coffee. Earlier last year, Juan sat down and did the math. Calculating days worked, fertilizers, and transportation costs, Juan reasoned that he was losing money to the tune of Q150/quintal, growing coffee. "*Coffee doesn't pay"* Juan informed me decidedly. Now that the prices have recovered, some people profited, he explained, but little enough to where the promise of diversification is sounding better all the time, especially because *"coffee requires so much work."* Juan already keeps bees and sells

their honey, through ASODESI, which exports it. When I mentioned the idea of exporting some of the local varieties of wild mushrooms, he said that he had already discussed it with an *ingeniero*. He proudly informed me that he knew so many *ingieneros* because he meets them in his travels to other towns, where he seeks out contacts with experts. The same man "*ya se supero*" (already made it) selling papaya, and Juan clearly intends to do the same. A week before we met, Juan had invested Q425 on papaya seeds. As he took me around the plot he had cleared for them, he told me he had paid a discounted price he arranged through an agronomist friend. He can get 80 trees/*cuerda*, each of which fruits every six months. He figured he will sell the papaya for Q5/each, regardless of their somewhat small sizes. *"The problem,"* he said with a grin, *"is that no-one knows what they are yet."* I suggested that he slice one open and offer samples so that the people learn. Juan nodded and laughed. Later in our conversation, Juan talked about the type of production in the large coffee *fincas*. He said that they used tools to level the rows to make sure that no water escaped. *"Perfectly even!"* he exclaimed. They also use two applications of chemical fertilizers, and another organic fertilization every two or three years, he noted. Juan harbors a great admiration of the craft of the large farms.

Juan shows how the ideals and practices of *capacidad* have been picked up by rural Mayans and integrated into the construction of new sense of self and well-being. Juan takes calculated risks, experiments with new crops, thinking of how to use scientific knowledge to take the most advantage of his area. He is not limited to the "safe" cash crop of coffee, which he clearly sees as a thing of the past. Juan always looks for new opportunities to learn new things. Each of these traits, new aspects of his persona, work together to give him an elevated status in the community, as most members regard him as

a highly intelligent person, one of the most *capacitado* in the entire village. Juan clearly enjoys this identity and is greatly invested in it.

While some aspects of the new agriculture have caught on, others are less popular. While chemical fertilizers caught on for good, and are now almost necessary, I spoke to few farmers who still use organic fertilizers, at least to supplement the use of chemicals. And almost nobody grows vegetables for anything other than their own consumption. Juan is the exception. Coffee is almost the only export crop, and probably for good reason, given the climate of the town. Furthermore, existing agronomical knowledge did not disappear with scientific agriculture. These reveal a mixing of scientific discourses and practices of agriculture with local explanatory models (cfa Gupta 1998). Scientific explanations for soil quality and yield depend exclusively on measurable aspects of chemical processes, amounts of nitrogen, nutrients in the soil, seed variety, and the like. Most Mayans are familiar with these scientific terminologies, at least at the basic level, and tend to use them. At the same time that they use these discourses, many Mayans discuss these processes in terms of the sufficiency of insufficiency of *fuerza* (force). *Fuerza* is the basic life energy shared by both the soil and the fertilizer; it is what gives them their generative potential. When I asked, for example, why yields were low in these areas, or why they had been lowered over the last 30 years, and why more fertilizer was necessary, one farmer replied that the corn today didn't have any *fuerza*. As I discussed in chapter 3, most attribute this lack of force, at least in part, to a governmental and multinational capitalist conspiracy regarding chemical fertilizers—another example of blending explanatory frameworks. Although this could be seen as shorthand for complicated scientific processes that require intensive studying to understand, this would miss the important fact that Mayans maintain, independently of these explanations, a theory of life force, which transcends the scientific reductive

notions of why crops grow. Thinking in terms of *fuerza* is of more than anecdotal importance: it directly influences how farmers think about farming and farm.

There are more examples. Quite perplexing to Guatemalan agronomists is Mayan farmers' persistence in growing corn. It would make more economic sense, and be much less work, the experts argue, to grow only non-traditional crops for export, or, at least marketable crops. This is consistent with the neoliberal discourses of development nationally that see individual production as the key to economic prosperity for rural Guatemalans. However, all Mayan farmers in Los Altenses—even Juan Jiménez and Arturo Bravo—grew corn for their own consumption. Aware of the justifications offered by agronomists, farmers want to grow their own corn because they love the taste of fresh corn, which figures into literally dozens of local dishes. They especially love roasted or boiled *elotes* corn on the cob, with a generous amount of salt, lime and *chile*. The villagers I lived with looked forward with great gastronomical anticipation to the corn harvest; and when this would happen (it's exact date of arrival depended mostly on the amount of rain) was the topic of many an informal conversation. In addition to taste, many told me that they feared what would happen if they found themselves without money and out of food as well. Having their own supply of corn they at least had something, even if they had to supplement it later. Although I do not have sufficient evidence for this point, an additional reason why farmers worry about being without corn might be related to many peoples' understanding of the *fuerza* that fresh corn, grown from their own land and sweat, gives to the people who consume it. At risk of going out on a far limb, this link is possible given the association many Mayans share regarding their own level of respectfulness and their agricultural production.

Finally, like others have mentioned in regards to the Q'eq'chi Mayans in Alta Verapaz, many Mayan farmers in San Pedro continue to observe traditional practices of

personal discipline before planting corn, including abstaining from sex, consumption of alcohol, and other polluting activities for up to thirty days before planting (Wilson 1999). Asking permission from the lord of the mountain, or *witz*, is also required. One farmer told me that it was vital that one have a serious attitude, not to be joking around, the day that one goes to plant. It is a solemn occasion. Farmers see these practices as respect to the supernatural power of the *witz*, a being that can, depending on their disposition, affect the *fuerza* of a crop. Another friend of mine from Los Altenses suggests that these practices are not widely observed like they used to be. Perhaps this is because Los Altenses, due to its location near the town center and, therefore, nearer discourses and practices of development. Of course, how different systems of agrarian knowledge combine with scientific forms must vary throughout the region. The extent to which this is the case falls outside of the concerns of the present

Another indicator of the reticence of Mayans to fully internalize the dictates of development experts is that the vast majority of farmers who consider themselves acolytes of high-tech agriculture have still not made the move to organic coffee. ASASAPNE's director regularly expounds that foreign purchases want organic, shade-grown coffee, and will pay more for it. Agronomists like Ruben Vasquez decry the use of chemical inputs and insist that only organic agriculture, while it produces less output, is sustainable. But villagers doubt that their poor fields will produce without chemicals, even though some of their neighbors have made it work. *"The soil is accustomed"* many told me, using another phrasing that does not necessarily contradict the scientific understanding of the problem, but that nonetheless personalizes land in a way that seems to most of us to be quite unscientific. Others concede that it might be possible to make the switch, but think it would just be too much work for it to be worth it. I spoke to several who switched to organic production, and then switched back, discouraged by all

of the extra labor hours and rigorous organic standards required for such a small difference in price per *quintal*. Given the lowered production, and the marginal difference, most villagers are content to continue suffering through the yearly inflation of chemical fertilizers. Some would prefer not even to farm coffee.

Capacidad is also important outside the realm of agriculture. One Sunday afternoon after the market had died down, I ran into Juan at a local cantina where I would often go on Sunday afternoons in hopes of finding people I knew when they had some free time to talk, and also to enjoy a few cold beers of my own. Juan was drinking beer with two young men from the village. The youths were not drinking as much as Juan, despite his prodding and invitations, but were listening patiently to his advice. Juan was telling them about the importance of having "vision" and a "mission," arguing that both were necessary for a person to be successful. Vision was the goal, and the mission were the concrete, everyday steps one would need to take to get there. These were lessons he had learned—perhaps overheard—while working for ASODESI. As the young men—both high school graduates—listened, it appeared they were humoring him by sitting quietly, slowly sipping their drinks and nodding at appropriate intervals to the important points in his rant. I got the distinct impression that this was a lecture they had heard before, but nonetheless enjoyed listening to, or at least tolerated. He continued talking, somewhat repetitively, for several minutes, making sure to mention how much he has learned by traveling about to different *municipios*, making friends with professionals, and constantly remaining open to learning new things. Juan exudes confidence, often to the point of being arrogant. He enjoys being the one giving advice, mostly about what it means to be intelligent and to lead a smart life. This confidence is clearly born out of his conviction that he most closely approximates intelligence, as defined by *capacidad*.

Some villagers have evidently grown a bit tired of Juan's self-importance, which had definitely made me uncomfortable on several occasions. One evening I was sitting down on a log with one of Juan's neighbors who lives by the side of the road that runs through the village. Juan and the man did not talk, but exchanged a harsh stare with one another. Juan was clearly angry. I later found that the basis of the hostility was that the man I was with had been teasing Juan, saying he was from the neighboring town of San Juan. Juan is actually from *Rio Ocho*, the most remote *aldea* in San Pedro. The joke is about the name Juan, and also Juan's mustache, which is typical among Mayan men from San Juan, who still retain their native dress. This seemed to me to be a way to take Juan down a notch in his pride. Juan's difficulty in taking the joke seemed to me a sign of the strength of his investment in his persona as a person who should be taken seriously.

ARTURO BRAVO

Arturo, present in the last chapter as the village representative to DIGESA in Los Altenses, exemplifies similar characteristics. He and Juan are close friends, and often can be found having drinks together on Sunday afternoons. Both show their status through their consumption of food as well. Arturo, one of only two men in the village who can said to be anything close to 'fat,' has earned the nickname "gordo" for his soft, round belly that is visible through his shirt, which was always tucked in beneath his belt. Both men work with a local Ladino-led development organization. When I first met the community development committee in Los Altenses, Arturo spoke the most. More importantly, both have a deep investment in their status as village leaders. Arturo proudly described on several occasions how this was his second time to serve as president of the committee, and that the community had recently asked him back because the other committee had failed in their duties. Although it was a lot of work, Arturo says he

agreed, in hopes of promoting development in the community and to continue with the accomplishments that he had made in the past. He recounted with pride that during his term as president, they were able to get the school building we were in, as well as the road, a potable water project in one zone, and other improvements. Other committee members, two women and another man, the young *alcalde auxiliar*, were quiet, mostly nodding. At the meeting where I presented my plan to research to the village, it was Arturo who spoke on my behalf, arguing that my research would be good for community development. Arturo is an active and capable participant in village and church meetings and even at town level meetings with Ladinos present. He has no fear of giving his opinion in front of groups; in fact he appears to enjoy this immensely. Like Juan, he has a tendency to brag about his level of *capacidad* and of the projects that he has attained for the village. One evening, months after my arrival, and after a few drinks, Arturo reminded me to me that, "*If it were not for me, you wouldn't be here."* This assertion of dominance and status led into of a larger discussion of his leadership skills and credentials, traits that mark him as a true leader.

CONCEPCIÓN BRAVO

Concepción Bravo is a woman who is considered highly capacitated. She is a single and in her early 40s. Until last year, when she adopted a child, she had no children. Concepción lives with her sister, who is also single, but has two daughters, each from different men. The sisters share the responsibility of caring for their aging parents, who would not be able to live on their own. Concepción has a sixth grade education, and says she didn't want to do more than that. Most important to her identity as a *capacitated* person was her employment as the local representative for DIGESA's women's programs in the 1980s and 1990s. Both her and her sister worked closely with a Peace Corps

volunteer when he worked in the village, and still remember him fondly. When I asked her why she was chosen to be the local coordinator for the DIGESA's women's programs, she said that she could speak Spanish, and was not afraid of strangers, particularly foreigners. Concepción is active in local development, almost every form. There are very few women, especially from her generation, like Concepción in Los Altenses. Concepción associates with a fairly close-knit group of women leaders in the village, the majority of whom are also from the Bravo family. They, like their husbands, are considered the most *capacitada* in the village. One day I met a young woman while walking home from the town. She was a recent high-school graduate who stood out to me by being both curious and outgoing enough to not be afraid to strike up a serious conversation with an outsider, and a male outsider. I later found out that she was a leader among her peers (men and women)—one of the best athletes and academics of the young women in the entire town (Mayan or Ladino). When she found out that I lived near the Bravo family, she remarked about how much she admired Concepción, describing her as *"muy creativa*." very creative. It was true: Concepción had a very distinct way of carrying herself, a sharp sense of humor, and brought creative, positive energy to many situations.

Now that DIGESA is closed, Concepción stays active. She serves as one of the two women on the new COMUDE, headed up by Arturo Morales. The other is an elderly evangelical woman. Whenever there is an announcement from some institution or other about a project for women in the village, Concepción, tells others, arrives and signs up herself. She attends a number of meetings that are not for projects, but for *capacitaciónes*, sometimes walking to the town center, or taking the long bus trip to Huehuetenango. She is active in the *Foro de Mujeres Huehuetecas*,[2] a government sponsored women's organization, and also goes to talk given by the *Defensoria Mayan*,

Asociación CEIBA, and I remember when she went to a presentation given by CONAVIGUA. Often, she serves as the translator between development organizations and women in the community, many of who cannot speak well in Spanish. Concepción is a devout Catholic, and is active in church organizations. She is a member of the women's church organization *Maria Auxiliadora*, and attends weekly meetings. When talking about DIGESA's programs, Concepción often mentions how she learned how to bake a cake on top of her *comal*. I asked her how long it had been since she did that, and she told me she did it a lot for a while, but that it had been years. It reminded me of talking to my mother about learning how to make macramé plant hangars.

Economically, Concepción is fairly comfortable relative to her neighbors. She has already inherited from her aged parents some productive coffee land, and does her best to keep it up. Sometimes she works it herself, but often she hires help. She has a substantial cash income, and always has cash for emergencies. Her decision to adopt, in addition to being unusual, was a very expensive decision. Because she cannot breastfeed, she had to pay nearly Q50 a week for formula. Like most women in the village, Concepción many spends her days weaving, mostly *guipiles* (blouses), *cortes* (skirts), *or morales* (handbags). Some of these are for sale, but most of them are for one of her many nieces, for whom Concepción and her sister are parental figures. This does not make much money, but Concepción enjoys it. She is talented and takes pride in her work. Concepción has also tried enterprising with her weavings before. Years ago there was a cooperative system for buying thread for weaving, and Concepción would like to start another one. But she complains that local women too are distrustful of group leaders who hold their money. There are always accusations of theft. Therefore it was not worth the trouble.

I first met Concepción at the meeting with the COMUDE before I asked the village permission to do my research there. When I started doing oral history interviews in the village, I offered her a job as a translator. Arturo suggested that I ask her to help me. He told me that she spoke Spanish well, and had worked for outside organizations before. *"Ella no tiene miedo."* (She is not afraid) he said. That would not be the last time I heard that said about her. He mentioned her employment with DIGESA, which also made me eager to meet her. Beyond those qualifications, most men were far too busy with their own work during the day to help with such a task, as were most married women. When we began interviews, she was very helpful. Although she was not particularly interested in the interviews themselves, or overly curious about my research, she easily grasped the kind of information that I was trying to find out and was a quick translator. Disinterest aside, she struck me immediately as an intelligent, insightful person, and also good humored and irreverent. I got to know her much better when, a few days after she found out that I was looking for a place to live in the village, she offered to fix up an abandoned home in the same cluster of houses and hers and her brothers. The house had previously belonged to her sister and brother in law, who had since moved down to the Interamerican highway, where they operated a rather large *tienda*. Having hoped for a room in a house at best, I was very happy to have a larger space, which would give me privacy that I had never quite grown accustomed to losing on my previous stints of fieldwork. I offered a mildly inflated sum for rent, and moved in at the end of the week. Over time, I became close with all of the Bravo family, and one unrelated neighbor family, a young couple with two young children who lived next door. As fieldwork responsibilities became more and more pressing, I would accept more invitations for meals with the Bravo family, always pitching in on food purchases and, whenever I could, on the cooking duties. The latter was hard. My efforts at making

tortillas would evoke as much laughter as finished tortillas. After we were friends and neighbors, we would spend many evenings around the fire with the family processing the days' events. Luckily for me, Concepción was a willing and good translator on most evenings.

It struck me as odd that someone as well-off, fun, *capacitada* and attractive as Concepción never married. It was not for lack of opportunities; and she has had several boyfriends. She told me that she was thinking about getting married one time, but that her boyfriend went to the United States, and the relationship ended. She had turned down proposals from at least two upstanding men in the village. One of these proposals came while she was working for DIGESA, and she told him to wait until that was over, and then just never got back to him. The man, a young widower, got angry and still does not talk to her. It occurred to me that it would take a special man not to be intimidated by Concepción's level of *capacidad*, and her reputation as a formidable intellect and assertive personality. Nevertheless, I began to think that maybe the reason she doesn't want to marry is because she is acutely aware of the freedom she would lose if she had a husband. One time I asked her if there was any truth to my theory. She laughed and told me that it was probably correct. Over time I noticed that an overwhelming notion of women who were highly capacitated and independent were single.

Concepción pays the price for her relative sexual freedom. One of the incessant jokes in the pueblo that circulated soon after I moved into the house behind Concepción was that we were a couple, or at least that we were having sex. Rumors soon spread throughout the village that we were bathing together in the chuj (steam bath. *temascal* in Spanish). It was even said that there were pictures of this entirely fictitious event. These jokes never seemed to stop being funny for the peole, men and women, who would ask, and then giggle. *"Ella sabe noviar"* one told me, bad Spanish that translates roughly into

"she knows how to have boyfriends." I learned over time these were not the first rumors about her sexuality. Apparently, neighbors have long used the social weapon of gossip to control her, and other women's behavior. Although women can be *capacitadas*, this only increases their liklihood of being targeted for gendered criticisms and ridicule. This social pressure makes sure that she and other women keep in their proper place.

Comparing the figure of Concepción to those of Juan and Arturo further elucidate the gendering of notions of *capacidad*. Women, like Concepción, can speak publicly in groups, due to her recognized level of knowledge and understanding. Men in general, regardless of level of *capacidad*, have the presumed right to speak, although men with more *capacidad*—as shown in the male-male conflicts fought in the idiom of *capacidad*—claim more. Concepción, due mostly to her role in DIGESA, is recognized as possessing certain forms of expertise, and is seen as a trustworthy conveyor of information. Still, following the gendering of the routes to capacitación laid down by DIGESA, and subsequent programs, the capacidad of women was never equal to that of capacitated men. If present, a capacitated man would always assume a leadership role in a community meeting. Concepción and other women might speak to address a particular point, but then cede control to the male leader. Even in cases where a woman was seen to be more *capacitada* than many men, their leadership role was limited to women in the village. Only men are considered viable as leaders for the entire community. Despite the limitations of capacidad to undo the gendered structure of power in the village, or, in the case of Concepción's limitations on marriage-- it definitely makes inroads into these structures in ways that open spaces for women's agency. This promise of freedom and empowerment through increased practical knowledge and skill—in addition to whatever immediate material benefits—no doubt explains the attraction that *capacitación* has for women people like Concepción.

NO *CAPACITADOS*

One of the ways that I came to appreciate what discourses of *capacidad* had meant for the subjectivities of the rural villagers in Los Altenses was spending time with people who did not embody these norms. Most people, while not necessarily taking an over stand against it, do not jump at the chance of receiving a *capacitación*, or taking the responsibilities that come with it, such as a village *cargo*. These were in fact the majority of the residents in Los Altenses, and especially among the generation of men who had never attended school and who had only participated in a minimal way in the programs of DIGESA as well as subsequent development programs. I was able to catalogue a series of characteristics of the 'less capacitated' type that I will explore through another ethnographic profile. At the outset I would like to clarify that in making this comparison, I do not intend to reproduce the contours of a discourse that makes one into the norm and constitutes the other as somehow "lacking"—although this is exactly what Many villagers express. My point is not to reproduce a linear progression between the two individuals, but to bring into view the changes in forms of subjectivity

One of these individuals that I came to know best who falls into the category of "less capacitated" was Pedro Bravo. Pedro's sense of self and well-being makes an interesting comparison because he is Arturo Bravo's older brother. He is ten years older, but his manner of carrying himself and of acting quite different. There are many similarities, of course. Pedro is an upstanding community member, and is always present in communal celebrations or in communal work projects. He rarely misses a church service in the village, and usually attends the Mass in the town. Several times, he has participated actively in political campaigns. But it was the differences that stood out so clearly. Pedro never went to school and his Spanish is somewhat sparse, although he

does understand enough to have basic conversations when given sufficient time. Because of this situation, Pedro has received little direct training in agricultural program, and he relies instead on his siblings to fill him in on whatever key points they have learned. He is very easygoing and secure interpersonally, and does not attempt to manage the impressions that he makes according to what he perceives as my expectations of 'capacitated' behavior to be. These image-managing practices were common, to the point of overcompensation, among the capacitated villagers, especially Mario Jiménez, who was always worried that others perceive him as an intelligent leader. Beyond this, Pedro does not engage in the type of long-term calculation and preoccupation about agricultural production. Pedro informed me that he has never considered diversifying his crop. Nor has he given thought to the oft-repeated warning given by agronomists regarding about what will happen to his corn crop fifteen years down the line. When I asked what he would do if his milpa production reduced entirely due to the diminishing returns of chemical fertilizers, he replied simply that if his land *"is burnt by chemicals, I will apply a remedy."* He assumes that the problem must have an easy solution, without being aware of what that solution might be. Pedro is not interested in learning to read or write, and the little Spanish that he knows seems quite enough for him. When I asked one of Pedro's cousins about his intelligence, he replied that, *"of course Pedro is less intelligent. But he has learned. We taught him certain things, about planning and taking care of his money."*

LOS SUPERADOS

Most rural Mayans I talked to expressed a desire to *superarse* "to get ahead" economically. Kay Warren identified this as a goal expressed by Mayan movement activists (1998). This category existed before *capacidad*, with the advent of cash

cropping and merchant activities among Mayans. Today, it has also become the preeminent end goal of *capacitación*, through technical skills or education. Participants in DIGESA were assumed to be following a path to "*superación*" through economic practices of savings, investment and credit. For the vast majority of individuals who are capacitated, this is an ever-receding horizon. Few actually reach the end point of superación People who have already made it, however are called superados. These people are commonly imagined to be economically "set" for life. Many people who are superado stop being farmers and instead own small businesses, like a larger *tienda* (store), a *comedor* (restaurant), or a pharmacy. They buy houses, always with the newest in construction materials, sometimes in villages, but often as near as possible to the town center, and on rare occasions in Huehuetenango. Some buy trucks and give rides to people for money (although being a truck driver in and of itself is not enough to qualify someone as superado). Others that continue to farm are more likely to hire the manual part of the work to someone else.

The archetypical figure of Mayan superación in San Pedro is José Martín. He is not only the richest Mayan in the town, but he is wealthier than any Ladino. He owns the *transportes Sampedranos*, a three bus line that makes the 90 kilometer round trip trek to Huehuetenango twice daily. Many villagers told me repeatedly the Cinderella story of his success: when he was young, José came to San Pedro from another town, he sold dried fish for pennies, walking village to village. He then upgraded his stock to include kitchen-ware, and, little by little, saving his pennies, always investing, his wealth multiplied. Being *superado* is most often seen as an irreversible condition. It is something that one does once, and then is set for life. To achieve this status is almost to become legendary. Only in extreme cases can people fall from grace. The ex-mayor, Natanael, was one example of someone prominent who had fallen. When he was mayor

he lived in Huehuetenango, but years later he had to go back to his village to farm coffee. Another of the most famous examples of Mayan superación in San Pedro Necta is the late José Antulio Morales, who I will describe in more detail in the next chapter. A new entry into this class are people who have come back from several years of living in the US, although their status can end after a few years of hard luck upon return to San Pedro.

The *superados* are distinguished and distinguish themselves through their consumption patterns, which can seem quite ostentatious, especially relative to the threadbare conditions in which so many Mayan-Samedranos live. Of course, like the capacitados, nearly all superados send their children to high school, and when possible, to college. All of them purchase trucks, which they then use to either generate more wealth, or simply for personal transportation. Like the *capacitados* again, another major investment is usually made in houses. But their houses tend to be of *terraza* (terrace) a flat, cement ceiling. The most famously wealthy among the Mayans live in houses in the town center, many of multiple levels. Some even own houses in Huehuetenango. Most invest in some form of business beyond traditional agriculture. Many for example own pharmacies, hardware stores, and larger *tiendas*. They also engage in a large amount of luxury and leisure consumption, such as: eating in *comedores*; taking frequent trips to Huehuetenango; buying expensive new clothing; drinking beer and whiskey (and regularly and inviting friends to drinks); and throwing extravagant birthday parties for their family members. *Capacitados*, and many *no-capacitados* also throw extravagant parties where they feed many neighbors, sometimes cooking upwards of 50lbs of chicken—a huge expense. This seems to be local custom, probably rooted to the potlatch system of traditional Mayan authority systems, the *cofradía* (cfa Smith 1984, Warren 1978, Watanabe 1992). Parties thrown by *superados*, however, tend to be on a much larger scale, often involving hundreds of invitees.

LOS PROFESSIONALES

In the most basic sense, to be a professional is to have earned a degree. These are people who have earned a high-school diploma. At the pinnacle of this category are the *licenciados*, individuals with an advanced college degree. This subset of the term *capacidad* refers to a person who works primarily with their mind. The most common example is an elementary school teacher. In each case, it denotes someone who is qualified, even if temporarily unemployed, to have a job with a salary, and not work as a farmer. The term *licenciado* commands a great deal of respect. The vast majority of the professionals among Mayans, from the villages especially but in the town as well, are young, although in the town, as discussed in chapter one, had a politically decisive class of professionals arise in the late 1960s. Most are below the age of 35. This is the first generation of children whose parents had made it enough economically to be able to afford to send them all the way through school, and, in a very few cases, into college. There are currently no indigenous attorney's in San Pedro, for example; and there is only one indigenous doctor in the town. So far all of these professionals have come from families in the town center. The house that I lived in Los Altenses used to he the home to a young man who, if he graduates, (at the time of this writing he has one year left) will be the first indigenous male lawyer in the town.

Not working as a farmer is the mark of distinction shared by the professionals and the superados. Parents complain regularly that their high-school educated children are no longer accustomed to agricultural work, and feel like they are too good to do it. They prefer *"trabajo suave"* (soft work). Although they complain, parents commonly recount how they worked hard and sweat to make sure that their children got an education so that they would not be farmers. Being a farmer is like being stuck. Consumption practices

among this group vary, depending on the job that one attains. Elementary and high school teachers earn a monthly salary of about Q1000-Q1500, much more than the average farmer, but not enough to buy car without a few years of savings. But first and second year teachers regularly build new homes; and nicer, more expensive, clothing is a hallmark. One growing problem for young high school graduates trained as teachers is that there are now too many teachers for the positions available. Those who work as teachers complain of having to live in remote villages far from their own to get a contract. Contract employment for one year or one semester, as opposed to guaranteed work, is becoming more prevalent, leading to a rise in economic insecurity among this group. The fate of this group is a looming question. Many have so far opted to search for work in the US, but this option seems to be closing due to increasingly restrictive border enforcement policies in the US, which have made the trip more expensive and more dangerous.

NO QUIEREN DESARROLLAR

I became acquainted with another, much more distressing, form of categorization with origins in the new discourses of development during my first week in Los Altenses. A subset of people who are non-developed, these are the people about whom it is said that they *do not wish to* develop. I was first made aware of the existence of this category when I went to interview a somewhat elderly couple, each in their late 60s who lived among the Ruíz family. Although the husband, Paulo was himself a Ruíz he immediately began to decry the way that the rest of the people in his zone lived, mostly his cousins' families. Bristling with exasperation he described the way his neighbors lived as follows:

> They are barely surviving. But with their clothes you wouldn't know it—better than other people's! There is no corn in the house. The family is sad. They just

> drink. This is not a good life. They always want to borrow money from me, but they won't pay me back. And I don't have enough for everyone! There is money [to be made]. But they just spend and spend and they don't want to work. They just come at night when they're hungry to steal hens.

Paulo's children in the United States, he has three, send them money regularly, essentially maintaining their household, the finances of which are perpetually devastated due to Paulo's—a self described fallen evangelical—debilitating alcoholism. Despite the irony or hypocrisy of Paulo's tirade, I encountered expressions of moral outrage towards their neighbors, even their own (extended) family members, on many other occasions in the time I spent among rural Mayan farmers in San Pedro.

Like many other anthropologists and social workers who take up residence in Mayan villages, I had heard similar attitudes to the ones just described many times expressed by town Ladinos, even Ladinos who live in remote *aldeas*. When I told town Ladinos of my intention to live in the *aldeas*, many were astonished and expressed concern. Unable to comprehend my decision, they would almost beg me to change my mind, saying, with a pained look on their faces, *"You're not going to live there, Nick! Their houses are ugly. Their food is ugly. They live with hens in the house. It's dirty!"* and so forth. These age-old stereotypes of "dirty Indians" were commonplace among local Ladinos, who, even if they think of themselves as sympathetic with the indigenous, still pity them and condescend to them without thinking it possible otherwise. My response was always the same: *That is where the people live, and I will live with them.* This was usually enough to silence the critics, many of whom felt obviously uneasy especially when their own racist biases were pointed out by someone they thought of as "more modern" than themselves. This anxiety exemplifies what Hale (2006) describes as the "racial ambivalence" among Ladinos in Guatemala: Having abandoned the overt racism of the past, they readily embrace and espouse an ideology of equality; yet most

hold tightly to their superior to Mayans. In rural towns like San Pedro, I would suggest, belief in a pure biological racism is still deep seeded; but the anxiety is still present.

As seen in the case of Pedro Bravo, despite the universal acceptance of the value of development itself, and recognition of the power in capacidad, not everyone is as excited as everyone else about achieving it. Still another category of people live, as it were, in violation of the norms of development. One of these people who fit into this category was Felipe Ruíz. Felipe lives on the edge of the village furthest up the mountainside. His house is small, one room with no kitchen, as is the local preference. He unapologetically claimed these traits when I met him at his house the first time I arrived for an interview:

> There is no money. After the coffee harvest then there's money. We are barely eating. Yo se chupar. (I'm a drinker.) I can drink 15 beers. When I've got money. I won't come back home to the house on Sunday, not until Monday. I'll sleep on the floor of the cantina. Sometimes I spend Q200 on beer. That's why there isn't any money.

Another way that Felipe 'fit' this type was evidenced in his behavior towards other people's property. One day I went to help him gather gravel. Felipe had been promised a light connection, for which a large post must be installed. The *alcalde* said he would pay for the post and cement, if Felipe dug the hole, and supplied the sand and gravel used to stretch and strengthen the cement. When I met him on another occasion, he wanted to enlist me in gathering some gravel. He handed me a costal a large *costal* (nylon sack used for 100lbs of dried corn or coffee) and a *mecapal* (tump line). Grabbing a small pick, he led me out the door and down the steep slipperly slope to the *pena* (rock outcropping) on a neighbors land. While filling the bag, with rock that he chipped off the *pena*, he told me that he didn't have permission to gather gravel, but that he was doing it anyway. With veins in my neck popping out as I strained against the weight of the mecapal, and my boots slipped on the thin footholds in the steep muddy trail, I pondered

not only the difficulties of everyday peasant labor, but also the humor if I—the *gringo*—were to die by having my face smashed into the rock by the 80lb bag of stolen gravel that teetered precariously on my back. Always eager to live down such stereotypes, I trudged on out of sheer embarrassment for how difficult the task was for me, 165 lbs (at the time), and how much easier it was for Felipe, who couldn't have weighed more than 120 pounds.

Felipe is not an active participant in development, or in community social life in general. He has never been on a village committee neither does he care for the idea. On occasions he will help in community work projects, like cutting the grass on the side of the road with a machete, "cleaning" the road. He even showed up one time to help build the foundation for the new Catholic Church house being built in the village. But these were rare occasions. I never saw him in a church service. When I asked him why he helped work on the church, he replied: *"I don't have a religion. I only went to help with the church in case one of my children wants to hear the word of God. Yes, I believe in God. [….] Yes, but I don't go to church."* Felipe's non-participatory leaning evidenced in his lack of care for his soul is evident as well in his attitude towards politics. Felipe does not attend community meetings to discuss development projects. He does vote, but he did not actively participate in the campaign for any given party. In addition, Felipe lived in a village zone, or subsector, occupied exclusively by members of a large extended family, almost all of who voted for the FRG. Curious about why, I asked him. Felipe's attitude towards politics was similarly astounding, this time for its brazenly disengaged fatalism:

> NC: Why do you vote for the FRG? Many people say that Ríos Montt killed a lot of people. What do you think?
>
> Felipe: Yes, he is an *asesino* (murderer). I only went to vote for Mariano Díaz (the FRG candidate for *alcalde*). I don't participate in politics. I just mark an 'X'

> and go back home. I voted for the FRG because they said they would pay the patrollers and they also gave me a job. But the job is over already. I don't have a political party; there isn't one of them in favor of the people.

These traits, including this final crime against "good citizenship" does not resemble a denial of his neighbors' normalizing value judgment, but immersion in it. This is not exactly resistance. Felipe does not resist development as a result of some sort of primordial fear or loathing, but with full understanding of the stakes. He is just not interested in doing what it takes for his life to resemble the norm. There are a lot of people like Felipe who refuse to live by the rules. In some sense, they seem to like to break the rules, publicly and audaciously, trying to make a scene. Most of then this happens when they're drunk; and drunkenness is the classic habit of someone who does not want to develop. In some contexts, being drunk is like a crime against *capacidad*. It undoes it, puts it on hold. Being drunk is publicly understood as a time when someone might let go of all the demands of being responsible, all of the guilty that it brings. One of the great appeals of evangelicism is their renunciation of alcohol consumption, to end with drunkenness and with the mindset. These lettings go are consummated by behavior that causes danger to oneself. Drinking too much harms the body and the wallet, as much as it harms the soul. Felipe is creatively working some sort of counter-norm, staging what seem to be small, ultimately directionless inversions of his neighbors, and even his own, notions of acceptable, healthy, positive behavior, and especially anything resembling becoming 'developed.' It is as if, realizing that he cannot win the game, or stay in the game in a reasonable way from working, then he will simply not play. This seems to be a shortcut to the masculine subject-hood attained by others through mastery of discourses and practices of *capacidad*. Renouncing *capacidad* and *superación* can also be thought of as a type of masculine performance. Spending money with abandon and drinking heroic amounts that can turn quickly into tragedies. Even in pueblos where women

engage in drinking, excessive drinking is still largely a male way to show strength. So are displays of wealth. Mayan women do engage in shows of wealth, but more subtly and not usually in *cantinas*.

CHANGING SELVES

Even if discourses and practices of *capacidad* have attained hegemony within the community, no villager has completely assimilated to the norms of *capacidad*—regardless of the degree to which they proclaim them. Some parts of the development programs caught on, while others did not. The same processes of hybridization and selective evident in local manifestations of modern agricultural practice also pertain for the notions of the self. Implicit in the discourses of capacidad is the centrality of one's own modernity and level of training as a form of identification. There is no explicit value placed on Mayan cultural attributes in discourses of *capacidad*. Yet, in all but a very few cases, even the most *capacitated* Mayans continue to speak Mayan languages. Even Mayan women who have held municipal positions of authority and who have been teachers for thirty years continue to wear their traditional dress in public occasions. Younger professional women are more likely to wear non-traditional clothing, but still prefer corte and guipil. Most *capacitados* continue to live in villages, even if there is a trend for many younger professionals to build their new homes toward the town center. It is among the professionals that interest in the new Mayan movement has been the strongest. Some have worked for as instructors bilingues, Mayan centered organizations, like the *Academia de Lenguas Mayans,* ALMG, and various other NGOs and government development programs that include a focus on Mayan culture

Another example of cultural difference can be seen around the notions of individual self-reliance. The communal orientation, so evident in community struggles

for development in the 1960s and 1970s, has little place in contemporary understandings of development as capacidad. The subject of discourses of capacidad is the individual, not the family or the village. Personal well-being is the result of individual choice for personal development. The benefits of development, supposedly, go to people who choose wisely. Still, perhaps more interesting is the degree to which people maintain a non-individualistic focus in their development. Immigrants send back large sums of money to support their families in Guatemala, even those who have been gone for decades and have no intention of ever coming back themselves, even in cases where it might be possible. Young professionals continue to give money back to their parents, for emergencies and mundane expenses. I spoke with many who help support their younger sibling's education. It is very common for a person to forgo an investment in their own future, such as more schooling, in order to meet family obligations. Many individuals with a large amount of capacidad use it to help their village, for example, coordinating with outside institutions and authorities or serving on development committees. One of the major draws of being seen as capacitado is that it grants one authority as a leader of ones' own village through giving a personal reputation as someone with the skills and disposition to help ones neighbors. For their part, *superados* make a point of spreading wealth to their close friends and family members. My point here is not simply to draw attention to, as others have done before, the persistence of "Mayan culture" or a distinctly Mayan "moral economy", especially if either term intends to describe a bounded or discrete unity, shared by all Mayans in an equal way. And these traits can be seen in many different parts of the world. The important point here is that becoming *capacitado* does not entail a giving up cultural elements that mark people as part of Mayan culture.

Although these examples are evocative, they do not clearly convey a sense of self outside of the boundaries of development. Even Felipe, it seems, still constructs his self

in terms of discourses of capacidad, if only to invert them. Is there something irreducible to these discourses, present in different ways in each of the categories of person that I describe, that can be seen as a 'Mayan' sense of self? Thinking about these questions leads me to back Pedro, the non-developed person. His unassuming manner can be, and is, coded as lack, simple backwardness; but a negative categorization can never capture a person's identity. What Pedro does not do, and what makes his difference stand out to a 'modern' self is that he does not conceptualize of his person or self as a particular object which he is trying actively to fashion and improve through different subjectivating techniques throughout his life span, conceived in empty homogenous time. He does not see his self as a "work in progress." Nor is he investing and shaping and cultivating a self for public circulation and display. Pedro is not a bragger, like his younger brother. He is not arrogant; but nevertheless has pride in himself and his accomplishments. This self is not a commodity, in the way that it can be for people who think of themselves in terms of discourses of development. Instead, Pedro works hard to provide for his family and participates in village life. He wants to be a good person; but being a good person does not require subjective transformations in institutions or "getting ahead." While he may participate in attributing status to people who have done this, he is not personally interested in attaining it.

In thinking about Pedro, I am reminded of words of a friend of mine, Jacinto, a man in his early 40s and considered quite *capacitado*. Jacinto is a *catequista*, and a careful thinker. While conversant and confident in Ladino culture, he insists on a difference between indigenous and Ladino. He sees that,*"la gente indigena son mas sencillos, son mas humildes."* (Indigenous people are simpler; they are more humble.) Ignore for a minute that this statement seems to essentialize indigenous people in a noble savage kind of role. Rather, it seems more important that, despite his personal and

political investment in *capacidad*, he withholds a value judgment. Although he believes Mayans should develop to become *capacitados*, he values these qualities; they are meaningful differences.

Rather than thinking of new elements in terms of replacements, I want to emphasize the existence of ways of conceptualizing the self and social world irreducible to dominant discourses on development. Others have pointed to the smoothness with which subaltern populations smooth over or ignore contradictions between these forms of knowledge and scientific forms (Gupta 1998). My research reveals that, although Mayan farmers often hold divergent conceptions simultaneously, at particular points when they come into conflict, many show a preference for 'local' understandings and practices. Adherence to these local explanatory systems and practices come despite criticisms leveled by agronomists, town Ladinos, and some Mayans who consider themselves 'more *capacitated*.'

REFLECTIONS ON *CAPACIDAD*

These examples clarify some of the ways that *capacidad* has became an important way to think about one's own self. It provides a conceptual and narrative framework through which people can think of their own selves, as well as of others. The common belief in the statement, "*Before there was no development. But now that is changing."* is evidence of this reconfiguration. The validity and naturalness of these categories and these narratives of teleological progress became embedded not through blind faith in development institutions, but as a result of the particular social changes these new forms of thought, new practices, and new technologies made possible. Their reality ossifies through the ways that they became useful and desirable to people faced with the everyday task of apprehending their social world and formulating their selves. The process of

capacitación is almost universally invoked by Mayans, from all the categories mentioned here, as a narrative of progress, as a path out of racial subordination and towards personal advancement and freedom.

Having *capacidad* means to be important. It means not being afraid. It means to be knowledgeable. It connotes ones involvement, one's seriousness as a person. It gives one the right to speak. It is the knowledge that is worth suffering to attain, and important to share. They know the game and the rules better. This is why people with *capacidad* get respect. Everyone looks to them as leaders. They are given power, authority, and have access to different sources of money. They are secretly envied just as much as and at the same time that they are publicly respected.

Capacidad is about racial dignity as much as personal dignity and status. Becoming *capacitado* at least in theory allowed Mayans to be considered equal to Ladinos. More training and certificates proved that one is equal. More practically, it meant that they no longer had to be fooled by them. They now had the tools, the knowledge, to defend themselves. Now there was no longer a reason to humiliate themselves to Ladinos, or to fear them. Being *capacitado* meant the end of supplicating behavior.

A norm has emerged, and is reproduced, revoiced and re-inflected in everyday life. To point to this norm's emergence is not to suggest that everyone is the same, but in the sense that each person can be thought of as occupying a place in relationship to a certain ideal. Juan and Arturo, among several others, are the "most capacitated" and Pedro is among the lesser capacitated. The ethnographic evidence presented here of particular examples is an attempt, although necessarily an incomplete one, to be represent the range of inscription practices. Most villagers are more or less on a continuum between these different poles *capacidad*, *no-capacitado*, etc.

Capacidad is heavily value-laden concept. A powerful indicator of this reorganization of value is that almost every villager that I spoke to equated the level of *capacidad* with level of intelligence. No one thought that someone who had not been to school could never be as intelligent as a person without schooling. This indicates a corresponding devaluation—at least discursively—of forms of knowledge that do not come from outside institutions. This way of making distinctions between people did not exist in the village in the same way three decades before; it emerged with the advent of development. Everyone was encouraged to evaluate themselves—literally "their self" —according to this new standard, presumed to exist independently of this process of marking and disciplining bodies. In general this was true given that anyone in the community would concede, as I have mentioned, that Ladinos were more capacitated than Mayans. During my time in Los Altenses, I was able to see how villagers constituted this new norm by labeling those who did not quite fit the standard.

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[1] I thank Virginia Garrard-Burnett for stressing this point.
[2] The FORO de Mujer, as it is known, is led by Ladinos from Huehuetenango. When created after the Peace Accords, which were its legal charter, the FORO had indigenous women's representatives on the *junta directiva*. Early on FORO leadership was taken by ladinas. It is an apolitical association that intermittently has small 'projects' or offers workshops for local women, usually about women's rights.

Chapter Seven: Re-Imagining Mayan Politics Through *Capacidad*

The last chapter examined how discourses of *capacidad*, consolidated by DIGESA, have reshaped the self-conceptions of many Mayans, and created a new way of thinking about and acting upon the self and social world and of distinguishing between and valuing persons. By promoting institutions like DIGESA, the state opened a sanctioned route for Mayan advancement. This chapter explores how this space was occupied and reshaped by rural Mayans, and the impact of discourses and practices of capacidad on the internal dynamics of Mayan politics in San Pedro Necta.[1] By politics, I mean the ways that Mayans conceptualize their own political agency, make political demands to the state and to the town government, their conceptions of the need for political reforms, and their strategies for gaining a following. In particular, I am concerned with two related issues: the way that villagers understand the origins and solutions for poverty; and how notions of capacidad shaped the thinking of Mayan political actors in post-genocidal political movements regarding political alternatives. When compared to the evidence provided about Mayan responses to DIGESA in chapter 5, the descriptions in this chapter reveal a shift in Mayan receptivity to discourses of *capacidad*, as well as an evolution in their political effects. I argue that although notions of capacidad provided the moral authority and the belief in the efficacy of a challenge to Ladino authority in town politics, it is also limited by these politics in significant ways. This chapter wants to aid in this rethinking by identifying some of these problems and proposing alternatives.

CAPACIDAD AND GRASSROOTS MAYAN POLITICAL RESURGENCE

Practices and notions of *capacidad* and *superación* were crucial aspects of the conditions surrounding Mayan leaders' entry into the arena of electoral politics in the mid-1980s. In a short period of time, several processes made *capacidad* a necessity for holding positions of community leadership. As alluded to in the chapter about DIGESA, leaders of the programs received specialized training that would prove incredibly important in coming years: how to petition for infrastructural development projects through state institutions. I asked Arturo if DIGESA ever provided infrastructure. He said they did not, "*DIGESA didn't have [potable water], but they always oriented us in other meetings. How to get them. [they would tell us] "This institution helps with such and such," and the people always listened. We learned how to gain projects.*

Negotiating development projects with the state gave Mayans faith in this generation of political leaders (whose status as "bringers of development projects" I discuss in subsequent chapters). The stakes were high because now development money was coming in from different state institutions; and most of this money was heading directly for the Ladino dominated town center. Certain individuals gained reputations for being able to successfully navigate these institutions and bring projects to the villages. The few leaders of DIGESA trained to seek projects from major state institutions gained a particular advantage in this regard. As a result, men from both the Bravo family, and their friends in the Lopez family were consistently chosen to be leaders of the community development committees. People like these have political possibilities. In other words, after DIGESA made access to state resources dependent on the attainment of a certain level of *capacidad*, Mayan villagers made political leadership dependent on the same training.

When political parties began to search out indigenous candidates, they looked for the best-organized, most *capacitated* among them. These were identified as the most viable candidates. Pedro Ramírez was the first indigenous candidate for *alcalde* after the war. He ran for office in 1988 with the PAN. I describe his campaign, and the smear campaign against him in chapter 1. Pedro Ramírez currently works as a municipal policeman, performing maintenance duties, like sweeping the basketball court after market is over, for a small monthly salary. He has had this position since his friend Chepe was *alcalde*. Before this job, Pedro worked for FONDAMAYAN, the Mayan Foundation, doing interviews with locals about *costumbre* and local folklore. In one of our interviews, told me that none of the other more trained leaders in the group (he mentioned Chepe and Natanael specifically) had the nerve to be candidate. At that time, both thought that they still had too little *capacidad* for the job. When the political parties came to talk to the group, Pedro volunteered. *"It was not because he had the most capacidad,"* Antulio felt the need to point out, *"but because he was not afraid."* After Pedro was defeated the group chose as their second candidate Natanael. He was an elementary school teacher and the group thought that he could win a campaign because he was smart. Because he was a professional and indigenous, they hoped that the people would trust him. They were right. After Natanael served two terms, José Antulio Morales displaced him as the leader of the political group. The political group had agreed prior to Natanael's candidacy, that after two terms Natanael would step down and make room for another person to be alcalde. Chepe, his first councilor for both terms, and who had finished his high school degree while in the post, was the natural choice. Chepe had been in charge of most of the work anyway, especially of attending people in the municipal building, because Natanael spent most of his time in Huehuetenango. Chepe had a lot of support in the communities and the political organization itself as a result of

undertaking this work. When he challenged Natanael, the PAN party also backed him and Natanael had to look for a different party. Chepe won the election easily.

The personage of José Antulio Morales illustrates the political significance of discourses of *capacidad*. José Antulio, Chep Tul in Mam, or simply "Chepe" to his friends and family—was the most prominent Mayan leaders of the past two decades in San Pedro, the second Mayan to serve as mayor since the 1960 and the first to run for *diputado*. Even before he entered the *alcaldia*, Antulio was considered, without question, the most *capacitado* men in Granadillo—his home village. José worked in the DIGESA organization in the 4S program in his village. As a young adult, he got a sixth grade education. At the prompting of Arturo Ramírez when he was in his mid twenties, he trained as a *promotor sociale* from Rafael Landivar University in Huehuetenango. Later, he went back and finished a high-school degree. Despite this training, José Antulio Morales' true talent was politics. This stood out early on. People remember him as *astuto* (astute), and he was an excellent and moving public speaker. While working with Natanael during two terms as first councilor, Chepe finished his high school degree.

José Antulio Morales had a knack for figuring out what was important for a certain person, to be able to promise it to them to get their support. A widow of a prominent Mayan political leader in the 1970s told me one time he promised her a statue of her deceased husband in the park. She was honored and promised to support him in the upcoming elections, and to convince others to follow suit. Chepe never delivered. Someone who worked for José on prior campaigns, but who has since left politics, said that José never had any intention of keeping that promise because *"the* Ladinos *would never permit a statue made to an ex-guerrillero."* Juan Jiménez told me how Chepe, while courting Juan's political support, told him to *"Forget about coffee. Get coffee out of your head"* because if he won, he would send a agricultural technician to the village to

figure out what export crops could be grown at the elevation with the soil type in his village. The agronomist never materialized, a fact for which Juan was still perturbed when I spoke to him about it several months afterwards.

Discourses and practices of *capacidad* and the narratives of *superación* they support also permeated local conceptions of political alternatives for a new generation of Mayan leaders. When José Antulio died, the entire village, even some of his sworn political enemies, mourned him. *"There was no one else like Chepe,"* everyone said. On the day before Chepe's funeral, I had made a plan to speak with one of his closest friends, Mateo, a resident of Los Altenses who had come from another village, but had settled here after marriage. Mateo had spent two years in the US, where he had made a reasonable sum of money and then had recently returned. On that evening, we had a very interesting conversation, ranging from his thoughts about a return trip to the US, and to the impossibilities of Mayan-Ladino relationships, we were able to discuss Chepe's vision of Mayan politics, a vision that Chepe had shared many times, with a great deal of passion, with Mateo:

> Chepe worried a lot about education. 'Let there be more Mayan professionals!' [pretending to be Antulio] That was his goal. He would speak of the year 2010, when there would be more professionals than there are now. His people were, for the majority, gente campesina, but with experience, with preparation—the entire group was *superado*!—and they also had professionals participating. […] His goal was that there was superación in San Pedro Necta and in all of Huehuetenango.

Mateo's touching recounting convinced me of Antulio's deep investment in these terms, far beyond their obvious power as political rhetoric, and however opportunistically employed on occasion. Chepe felt strongly about these issues, which he saw as the route to the advancement of the Mayan people. He believed in *superación*, a value that forty years ago did not exist in a recognizable way among most Mayans in San Pedro, and that

today has the status of an unquestionable goal. For Chepe, as I would imagine is the case among many other politically engaged Mayan professionals of his generation, personal development overshadowed prior interest in revolutionary politics. Especially after state violence, *superación* through *capacitación* made more sense.

REVOICING *CAPACIDAD*

Capacidad's suggestion of a neutral scale of evaluation gave moral resonance to the decision to support a Mayan candidate for *alcalde*. Municipal politics is imagined by Mayans as much as by politically active Ladinos as a competition between two groups for control of town resources and institutions. *Capacidad* is the central weapon in this contestation. This point was clearly made by Gerardo, a family member of Antulio Morales' and a fledgling politician in his own right. When I asked why indigenous people have less '*capacidad'* than Ladinos, Gerardo's answer immediately turned to the subject of politics:

> Before there wasn't a lot of *capacitación*. Before, indigenous people were more discriminated against. Before in San Pedro, there were only Ladinos. Natanael was the first indigenous person. Afterwards José Antulio, then Mariano, so the people are preparing themselves. Now, the majority of indigenous people have studied. There are doctors. There are more educated people. Year after year there are more people who have studied. I have analyzed this. Ladinos have another form, another culture to live. Ladinos, they are, well, now not so much, but it still exists…they think that they are more able…that they are the ones that…but it's not that way. They always think they are better than the rest. But it's not true.

One of the greatest examples of Mayan re-appropriation was the move to use *capacidad* as leverage in local political struggles. After the defeat of the guerrilla, Mayans wanted to appropriate this term, which was previously used to justify their marginalization, and expand it into a legitimate platform from which to launch political opposition to Ladino

control in town politics. Notions of *capacidad* gave both moral legitimacy and credibility to Mayan politics. The moral legitimacy of this movement was that Mayans who had undergone a level of personal transformation deserved power, the same as a Ladino, especially given that Ladinos have almost *always* controlled town politics, even when indigenous men had rightly won the elections. It could not simply be any indigenous person. Not all indigenous people have the *capacidad*. Not unimportantly, these discourses of equality through development resonated with religious discourses at the time—both Catholic and different evangelical strands—that increasingly insisted on the common humanity of Mayans and Ladinos. The best-qualified candidate, regardless of race should be able to govern. *Capacidad* provided a seemingly color-blind method of measuring who deserves power. The more *capacitación* they received, the more emboldened Mayan political leaders were to challenge Ladino authority.

There is an important difference in the way that Mayan activists defined *capacidad* and the way that it was defined by Ladinos. During a long, thoughtful interview with Gerardo, I asked why he thought it was important for an indigenous person to be mayor. He offered that:

> For me it is important, because he dominates two languages. They give their speeches in Spanish and then in Mam. The people understand. Indigenous people are simpler, they are more humble. More…how can I say it? They have more patience to work with the people.

Interestingly, Gerardo redefines *capacidad* as including the ability to speak a Mayan language and possession of an inter-ethnic sensitivity to an almost inarticulable difference. The *alcalde* has to be able to speak to and serve two cultures on their own terms, which requires a special understanding, one that Gerardo is at a loss to put into words. He needs patience to work with indigenous who are "simpler and more humble."

Yet one needs to know how to deal with Ladinos, who are, by extension, more clever and arrogant.

One has a clear sense that simple and humble do not do justice to the qualities that Gerardo is attempting to evoke. It defies reduction to a neat, summary definition as a list of things. It cannot be easily represented. Valuing these traits in a public official is an example of a Mayan redefinition of the meaning of the requirements for how they want to be governed. I do not think that this should be taken as an example of Francisco's conviction that he is saying that only indigenous people can hold political office. A Ladino could be *alcalde*, if he possesses these abilities. Francisco is pointing to the reality that, in the current situation, there are no Ladinos that he can think of active in San Pedro politics that meets this alternative standard of ethical authority. It is not impossible for a Ladino, only difficult and certainly uncommon. This ability to move between groups was still viewed as a neutral capacity—anyone could do it—but was a requirement that gives a considerable advantage in this regard. This revised norm recognizes and satisfies demands for both equality—anyone can be *alcalde*—and difference—an *alcalde* has to recognize the needs for populations whose differences are meaningful. The other important difference, as you will recall from the chapter on San Pedro history, was the basis of the desire of a Mayan mayor: their disproportionate need for town resources. Mayan families disproportionately lack shelter, clothing, food, medicine, and money for education. Villages also are far underdeveloped, *vis a vis* the pueblo, and not to mention the city of Huehuetenango, in terms of basic infrastructure.

A poststructuralist critic might suggest that the one problem with discourses like capacidad is that they posit a gap between "developed" and "underdeveloped" can never be breached. By defining development as whatever the West is doing means that the subaltern will always be seen as "underdeveloped" because it will always be seen as

trying to "catch up." Ladinos will always be on top, no matter what forms of training Mayans undertake. But this is not how things played out in San Pedro. Mayans quickly immediately seized on the notion of capacidad as an equalizer to advance their collective struggles for political and cultural equality with Ladinos and economic well-being.

GENDERING THE SUPPOSEDLY 'NEUTRAL' STANDARD

However, one category of people that this standard for governance seems to exclude, if not explicitly, then by omission, is women.[2] When I asked the question above about the importance of having an indigenous alcalde, Francisco immediately assumed this was a man, at least that is what it appears when he began to describe what made *him* different from a Ladino. Competition on the scale of capacidad is an unmarked competition between men for authority. Even for those who would argue publicly that capacidad trumps gender as a standard for municipal authority, in practice operate under the assumption that political authority is by definition male domain. There has only been one woman to occupy space in the alcaldia in San Pedro Necta: Petrona Lazaro. Petrona is from a respected indigenous family from the town center. She is college educated. Her older sister is a retired school-teacher. She was appointed third consejal under José Antulio Morales. She told me that giving women a space was important to José Antulio. Indeed, when I spoke with him, he emphasized that several women were present in the early days of organizing in the mid 1980s, and still play an important role in community politics and development.

When I first spoke to Petrona Lazaro, she expressed an eventual desire to be *alcaldesa*. I was impressed. Then she recounted the story of how she had begun to campaign as first advisor for a man in the last (2003) election. Midway through the campaign she dropped out. Men in the organization continually criticized her, saying that

a *"woman couldn't win."* Men argued vehemently that the other men would never vote for a woman. Noting the self-serving circularity of this argument, Petrona said that she could win, but that the other men were so jealous of her because of her high level of *capacidad*, which was greater than theirs. But she quit when the criticisms would not stop. Months later when I asked if she still hoped to be *alcaldesa* one day, she said *"Why? so the people could call me 'ladrona'* (thief)*,"* which rhymes with "Petrona."

THE HIGH PRICE OF NEUTRAL STANDARDS: RE-ENVISIONING POVERTY

The overwhelming majority of Mayan Sampedranos live in poverty. About a third live in extreme poverty. Even in a village as 'developed' as Los Altenses, a village fairly close to the town center and home to several well to do families, the level of poverty in the village was striking to me, accustomed in a deep bodily way to North American overabundance. Many lack necessary shelter, food and clothing. Many families are unable to educate their children. Child labor is common necessity to make ends meet. Many children are hungry and undernourished, and many parents as well. Even better-off families eat meat as little as twice a week—except in the case of a celebration, even if individuals (mostly men) eat meat on additional occasions. Both men and women are often overworked. Existence is precarious for a good number of villagers. Savings are so small compared to the cost of medicine that a severe illness can wipe out a family's savings almost instantaneously. Many go without. Many high school educated children who want to continue to study cannot, and are forced to work to support their parents and brothers and sisters, or their own children. Most young children, especially men, have migrated to work in Mexico for slightly higher wages. Most young men and women whose families can help finance the trip, a notoriously risky venture which costs upwards of Q20,000, have seriously considered leaving for the

United States, or have already made one trip. The majority who do not have the money to migrate, or who cannot for some reason or the other, dream of it. Almost every day you can hear frustration expressed over the low wages paid to people for a day of physical labor—Q25 (approximately $2.75 USD). Not only are these conditions deplorable, there is a great deal of inequality. The standard of living among town Ladinos is usually much higher.

A high degree of economic stratification within Mayan communities has been well-documented. Annis (1986) traces Protestant conversion to a desire to forego the wealth destruction mechanisms central to traditional religious hierarchies, as well as social subordination by Ladinos. It was correlated to a desire to participate in market economics. In San Pedro, where at least one-third of villagers are Protestant, and traditional community hierarchies have been replaced by new Catholics, this process seems not to have a strong correlation to religion. Many of the wealthier and more market oriented Mayans I met were Catholics, equally unbound by traditional mechanisms. As described in the last chapter, members of both religious groups embraced developmentalist ideas.

One of the most significant effects of the emergence and dominance of discourses of *capacitación* and *superación* was a change in the way that villagers conceptualize these stratifications, and understand the causes and the solutions to poverty. James Ferguson (1991) defines "depoliticization" as the erasure of the political and historical roots of the creation of poverty, a process he argues is one of the most important "implementation effects" of development discourses, regardless of whatever other effects it might produce in a given historical context. As shocking and unacceptable as these socio-economic realities might seem to someone from the first world, they are natural and even normal to many of the people who live them. While living in the San Pedro Necta, I

encountered over a dozen ways that notions of development, and especially *capacidad,* was used by Mayans to explain this poverty away, to make it seem natural, normal, acceptable and for it to seem, above all else, as the responsibility of the individual. Some of these I have mentioned already, or play a role in these stories, others do not. These are all explanations that I have heard from Mayans speaking about other Mayans. I even heard more than one Mayan blame his own irresponsible behavior, especially alcoholism, for his own poverty. This includes, in no particular order, the following: failure to diversify their crops; plant too much corn, instead of a cash crop, especially coffee; failure to save, or spending money unwisely, especially on alcohol; too many children; failure to send their now adult children to study when they were younger; aversion to taking loans from the bank to make a personal investment; failure to take advantage of development programs, or failure to sign up for projects; burning their *milpa* (as a technique of fertilizing them); failure to apply new scientific technologies to their crops, for whatever reason; people who do not want to work, or laziness; people who, for whatever reason, "do not want to develop"; failure to plan their economic future; jealousy of those who succeed; and adherence to 'Mayan' culture. In public discourse, impromptu conversations, and interviews, the explanations for poverty that blame individuals themselves are the most prevalent. They indicate an acceptable level of "social abandonment" for certain individuals (Biehl 2005). These attitudes often resemble the racializing ideologies held by many Ladinos about indigenous people as 'backward' (Hale 2006). Despite these continuities, these explanations appear to have the most persuasive power. There are few acceptable answers to its logic, as the following ethnographic examples seem to demonstrate.

One sunny afternoon, I stopped to talk to a man who was a brother of man I knew from Los Altenses. Pedro waved me to sit with him for a moment as he took a break

from building his house, which was on the road from Los Altenses into the main town. It was a nice home, made of cinder blocks, and was of high value because it was close to the town. This being our first real conversation, and unplanned, I was slightly taken aback when he asked me, out of nowhere*, What science, what advice, do you have? What should we do to improve life here?"* As I had been striving not to put words in the mouths of my interviewees, I replied that I was interested in how he would answer the same question. Having obviously given this a great deal of thought, he responded:

> They say that it's possible to grow 8 *quintales* of coffee per *cuerda*, *con ciencia* (with science), taking good care, but the people here only [get] one. They don't want to work, they only do their work, planting corn the same way. They only toss out seeds and throw dirt on top. They're not going to grow like that. You can get 4 *quintales per cuerda* if you take care of it well. We don't use science. That's what the *tecnico* told me before.

His reference to "they" is obviously to agronomical scientists, an expert, who, in some form of another had been a presence in village life since the arrival of DIGESA. At this point in the conversation, another man, a friend of mine, Arturo, from a distant and very poor *aldea* in the township. Arturo had been visiting his son's family in Los Altenses but was now on his way to the market. He stopped, shook our hands in the customary and requisite show of respect, and began to listen and participate in the conversation, offering up support for Arturo's claim, *"Yes, it's true."* Then Pedro continued:

> The people before knew how to work, now they do not. But if there is food, 'let's go!', they're ready. But if you sit in the house all day, or only work half a day. The children study now and don't want to work in the fields. But there is money! The other thing is that the people get to drinking, and spend their money like that. Also, if a person works well, and achieves something, if they buy a pickup truck or something, others say that that person is a thief. That's why the people are divided.
>
> Arturo: Yes, it's true.
>
> NC: [laughing] is there jealously here?

PEDRO: [laughing] of course there is!

NC: I'm not sure. It depends on the land, how much fertilizer they're using. If there is no land for coffee […] Many people have told me that there is no time to learn…they're working every day and they can't go see an agronomist.

Arturo: Yes, sometimes it is hard, and now there is no agronomist like before.

PEDRO: Even if there are only 4 cuerdas, you've got to plant half of it in coffee, and the other half corn, but well cared for. If there's no coffee, you can plant vegetables, potatoes, pacaya, something to sell.

NC: Like the work that DIGESA was doing?

PEDRO: Yes.

NC: But potatoes don't sell much, now that so many people have them in the market. The people from [an aldea where they plant a lot of potatoes] tells me that they don't bring a good price.

Arturo: Yes, it's only to eat. You can sell one quintal maybe but not all.

PEDRO: [to me] What do you think about all that?

Me: It's true, there is a shortage of land, and working for only a jornal (25Q/day) is not enough to get ahead. It's important to develop, but you've also got to see its limits. Many people now don't have land, or maybe just one cuerda and the science doesn't even matter.

Arturo: Yes, that's the other thing we have thought. If there's no land, you can't do anything.

PEDRO: But now you're bringing the people down, you've got to lift their spirits.

ARTURO: Yes, that's the other thing that we thought. If there's no land you can't do anything.

In Pedro's narrative about *capacidad* and development, the problem of poverty, as a structural issue, become invisible. Science and technology can bring people out of poverty. They hold the solution. The only thing missing is individual initiative. Factors like the low quality of land, low wages, inflation, high costs of medicines, the decline of the price of coffee—or any of the score of other social and historical factors that have

combined to create the extreme poverty in which most of the villagers live—are irrelevant in this narrative. Instead, it implores us to scrutinize individual behavior. What scientific techniques do they (not) use? What do they do (or not do) with their money? How do they live (or not live)? Through this filter, these questions reveal the reasons why people are poor.

Examples of this kind of thinking are abundant, penetrating to interpersonal relationships between villagers, many of which are now experienced as relations of domination and subordination. Discourses of development play a large part in mediating these relationships in ways that render them normal, natural and inevitable. One event that clarified this to me during my fieldwork was witnessing a conflict between Raul and his *mozo* (peon) Esteban. Santos is a member of the Morales family, a young man about 33, the youngest of 5 brothers and a father of two. I knew Santos through because they were close friends of the family who had agreed to rent me the abandoned house near their lot. In response to my desires for an interview, Santos invited me with his wife to visit their coffee land in a nearby *aldea*. Santos was very well to do by community standards. He was the owner of one of only four trucks in the village and would make good money running *fletes* or cargo runs of firewood, coffee and other materials long distances for other villagers. He is also active in the community, participating in the cargo as director of the committee for potable water. Santos also plays keyboards in the Catholic Church band. In addition to this, and very important in terms of understanding Santos's status position, is the fact that his eldest brother had held a high political office for several years. He had a large, but modest home where he took care of his parents and lived together with his sister. This young, attractive and happy couple took my interest in an interview as an opportunity to go and have a day of fun, an opportunity to *pasear*. As we walked, we stopped along the way to grab handfuls of sweet *nance* fruit from another

villagers' field, a common and accepted practice, as long as you do not take very much, along the way. After walking for a little less than one hour, down the valley and then up again, we came to their land. Santos proudly showed me his coffee plants, saying that he had nearly 13 *cuerdas* of coffee—nearly ten times the community median. It was all chemical coffee, he told me, and he was able to get between 2-3 *quintales*/ *cuerda* annually, a sizable amount more than the local average. *"This is good land"* he assured me.

While he was showing me, his pride gave way to disquiet. Apparently, the person who had been in charge of taking care of the coffee had not done a very good job of pruning the dead branches. And there were a great many weeds in between the plants. Santos went to knock of the house where this person was staying, only to find that it was still locked. He broke in, the door only being wedged with a hoe on the inside. When he discovered that the person had indeed been around recently, evidenced by a still smoldering fire, he grew more upset, and spoke angrily to his wife Elvira in Mam. I determined that he did not want me to know why he was angry. We left the house and began to pick fruit—which, instead of the interview that I had hoped to get, was the point of the trip for Santos and Elvira. There would be no interview today. Nevertheless, it was fun, and we gathered nearly 20lbs of *limones mandarinas* from the tree, often climbing up them quite a distance to shake a branch or knocking them out of the tree with a long pole. Then, from behind some trees nearby, we heard an angry voice asking "who gave the order to pick fruit?" Santos jumped out of the tree, and identified himself as the owner of the land. The man was Esteban, the person that Santos hired to live in the house. Esteban had approached us with an angry voice, it appeared, defending Santos's fruit crop from what he feared might be another person. Esteban was a man of about forty, with very few teeth, whose clothes were in tatters and absolutely filthy. He was

small and very thin. The contrast was even starker when compared to the well-kempt and healthy Santos. As soon as the fact of their identities was clarified, Santos began to lecture Esteban in Mam. The only thing that I understood from the conversation at that time was that Santos was quite angry with Esteban. This was obvious from his body posture, the contrite look in Esteban's eyes and downwardly turned head, and the way that Santos repeatedly said *"No me gusta."* (I don't like it) and *"at puac"* (There is money). Esteban did not conceded easily however. He repeated the phrase *"Min ti puac"* (there is no money) several times, along with, in Spanish, *"no me alcanza"* (It's not enough to last me). Their awkward interaction lasted for nearly fifteen minutes. During Santos and Esteban's conversation, Santos did listen, for a long time, to Esteban's concerns. He didn't cut him off. Nevertheless, he never wavered from his position, and eventually was able to get Esteban to accept that this point of view was correct. He was somewhat sympathetic, it seems, as he has put up with this problem with Esteban for some time. Santos would accept nothing less than an apology, and indeed got one.

Later that evening, I asked Santos if he would please tell me what had transpired during that conversation. Santos said that the person, Esteban, who had been living there was a drunk, and that he was supposed to work for him, but did not do very much. They also let him live in the house because he was poor and a known drunk and they felt sorry for his wife and child. Santos wanted to ask him to leave today because work was not getting done. Also, Esteban, when drunk, yells insulting things to Santos and Santos's parents, foul words, and also says he doesn't pay him. The next week, I ran into Esteban in the town center. I asked him what had happened that day. His version was different from Santos's in several key elements:

> Santos got angry because when he got there, I hadn't done all the work. But Santos only pays me Q10 a day and he wants me to work every day. He only pays ten because he I live in his house. But the money is not enough for me.

> Corn is expensive. Sugar is expensive. There is no food for my family. I don't have any milpa. I don't have any other place to live. Santos says that there's money but there is not. I don't know what to do. There is no work here. And how am I going to work elsewhere when he wants me to work for him every day? It's hard. [long pause]. Is there work in the US? I'm thinking about going because here there is no chanca [opportunity].

Esteban's stance varies sharply from the founding assumption of the common discourse on *superación* through hard work. It does not matter if you work hard, even if Esteban worked a bit harder than he does, he would still be very poor. Knowing this gives him very little incentive to follow Santos's advice. It leaves him bitter; and he expresses his anger when he is drunk. Still, Santos has power over him, as landlord, power that Esteban acknowledges.

ERODING THE REVOLUTIONARY NARRATIVE

This represents a marked departure from the thinking that animated indigenous politics in the 1970s, when inequalities were seen as an effect of foundational inequalities and ongoing exploitation. In one conversation with Juan Jiménez, he told me that he thought people were poor because the country was so unequal, because *"the rich want it that way."* As much as this was something he believed, it seemed to me to be the answer that he thought that I thought was right, the answer that would bolster his identity as an insightful social analyst. But, soon after, in what seemed like a reflex, he added with a self-satisfied smirk *"they don't know how to work."* Such sentiments were quite common among Mayan farmers.

Over time, perceptions of and feelings regarding local participation in the guerrilla have also been re-sifted through the lens of *capacitación*. Gerardo, community leader politically active in the political movement headed up by José Antulio Morales, explained the decision of some community members (he did not suggest that he might

have been one of them) had sympathized with or supported the guerrilla due to a lack of *capacidad*, a lack that led them to be tricked easily into joining a cause that a more educated person, like himself, did not or would not have supported. After suggesting that they were obligated by both sides to participate, he entered into this explanation:

> Including also the ignorance of the people. Because the people were not learned. For example we, in our family, we analized it thoroughly. Because it is not simply deciding on a thing. For example, if someone comes right now, I can listen, but I'm going to ask for their identification, where they come from, what institution, what it is that they want.
>
> Likewise, when the guerrilla visits a family and start telling them 'Look señores, we're the guerrilla army of the poor. We are going to give you land. We're going to take it away from the rich and give it to you as a gift. Don't you want that? We want you to help us, to give us food, clothes, or a place to stay.' It sounds nice, right? It's the same if someone comes who wants to give a capacitación to the people. A coffee expert for example. The people say, 'We don't want capacitación.' But if he says, I come on behalf of a bank, or a company, or a business and there's money for loans, credit, then the people come. Worse if there's no guarantee [of repayment]. The people come quickly. They don't analize… we don't analize. That's how it happened before. I have analized it thoroughly. The people listened to the guerrilla out of ignorance. They offered and offered. It's the same as a candidate. I'm going to give you something, a lamina [corrugated tin roofing]. And then nothing comes. The army had a political objective, so did the guerrilla. They were offering. And for that reason the people went to them. Then when the army came, the situation changed. There was war. So, more for ignorance, they didn't understand how it was, how it is, what results will follow.
>
> It sounds good. A person gets to talking with his wife, between friends "Hey, let's go with them. They're going to give us land. They're going to take it from the finqueros and they're going to give it to us. This was the main part of the problem. The people aligned with the guerrilla to help, but they didn't know what would happen afterwards.

This is clearly at odds with the two armies discourse, providing some additional evidence for the re-thinking of the two armies narrative by members of this political movement, even though Gerardo oscillates between both narratives. Yet, instead of affirming Mayan agency in the revolutionary movement as a way to recuperate those political demands as

Mayan, he suggest that belief in those demands were a symptom of Mayan backwardness, or even 'Indianness'. Given that this is based in reasoning performed among his family members, including the former Mayan mayor of San Pedro, I think this represents the closest to his actual thinking on the matter. It is not so much that the guerrilla forced people to participate, but they convinced them. People were convinced out of their own ignorance of how politics really work. One similarity to the other discourses is that this disparaging judgment of past political participation is based on hindsight—reading the violence as an inevitable result of the guerrilla movement. This narrative therefore shares in the foreclosure of historical possibilities in the other dominant public narratives. Embarrassment for having been these same ignorant Mayans was, I think, what leads him to hesitate between the pronouns 'they' and 'we' when he is discussing the failure of Mayans to analyze the (inevitable) consequences of their decision. Participating in the revolutionary movement seems to be a moment of infantile naiveté. Respect for that decision is non-existent. Gerardo wants to place himself, and his family, in a different category, but then, out of a sense of honesty perhaps, decides that he is talking about himself and his own family's ignorance as well. Although not quite a confession of guerrilla involvement, the embarrassment expressed here regarding could be additional evidence as to why two army narratives came to dominate.

In the one interview that I did with Chepe Antulio while in San Pedro he went so far as to use the idea of *capacitación* to explain his decision, after the Peace Accords, to not participate in the newly legalized party of the URNG. He said that he didn't want to work with the URNG because they did not offer him a post as a mayoral candidate or, later, as a *diputado* (legislator). He says this was because they URNG does not recognize, or appreciate the *capacidad* that he had, especially the experiences that he had accrued during numerous years of public service in the *alcaldia* of San Pedro Necta.

I found other evidence that notions of *capacidad*, again with the help of violence, have eclipsed ideas of political struggle. Going back to the conversation that I had with Pedro, who had pulled me aside to talk about politics while he worked on his new house. After he espoused the virtues of studying scientific agriculture, I asked him what he thought about the URNG, and their attempts, in the past at least, to win a land reform. His initial response was typical to what I described in the previous chapter on state violence:

> You can't do it. It's as if someone wants to take your moral (woven shoulder bag). It's yours. They struggled for the land here, but they didn't win. And look at this government that came in now [President Berger], you saw what they did at Nueva Linda…[…] And those groups have their faults as well. They just want to grab land, they don't want to work. Why do I want to go to a reunion [a political meeting] just to talk? I'm just going to waste my time. It's better to do something real, to look for development.

Unlike revolutionary alternatives, which will only end in violence, development is something real. Revolution is a fantasy, just idle talk, not a serious option.

Despite these ways in which notions of *capacidad* seem to shift contemporary thinking about political alternatives away from reform, Gerardo sees untapped possibilities for using the notion of capacidad as an alternative to current patterns in Mayan politics. Coming on the heels of an overwhelmingly pessimistic assessment of the outlook for political reform in Guatemala, Gerardo added that, *"for God nothing is impossible,"* and then proceeded to lay out the following vision through which "political reform" (he is unclear about what this would be) could be achieved:

> If the people think it through. If the government were to worry about the people, and trained them in what it is to vote. Perhaps things could be fixed. It would be great if the government came in to explain what voting is. If the Tribuno Supremo Electoral put more people to work, then yes. But what happens? They send a few, in the months just before the elections. Only in the closest areas. And so the people always vote for personal interest.

Another man, more educated than Gerardo, told me that he dropped out of the the campaign, ceding his post to Gerardo, because he was unwilling to continue lying to people about projects that would never come. Gerardo made outlandish promises in his campaign, only to lose. When I arrived in Los Altenses, Gerardo seemed to be in a period of reflection on his own political process, even his own participation. As an alternative to the lies, Gerardo suggests that people should vote for a candidate who has a plan and who is also *capacidato*. It is interesting that most of their neighbors describe the Morales' political participation as motivated by personal interest. Gerardo appears to be criticizing Mayans who vote for the FRG (he himself recently lost a campaign to the FRG); but he might be criticizing behavior in general.

This is the same point of view shared by many international NGOs and the NGOs of the Guatemalan left. Before the last two elections, *Asociación* CEIBA led a *voto consciente* (conscious or informed vote) campaign, which emphasized that the vote should remain secret, is an individual decision, should not be sold, and should be cast for the 'good of the country'. Much like Gerardo suggests (indeed Gerardo might be paraphrasing from a reunion he attended sponsored by CEIBA) they say that votes are not for sale, that they are private, individual decisions, and that they need to be cast based on who a person thinks might be the best leader. This perspective on voting seems a crucial element for the strengthening of democratic institutions in a country where the idea that people select their own leaders been non-existent, and among a people who have always been excluded from narratives of equal citizenship, however hollow they might have been for their supposed subjects. The problem with his interpretation, for me, is that it makes the assumption of false consciousness and ignorance. They assume that the people voting now have little idea what they are doing when they vote, and that is why they vote the way that they do, that people vote the way they do because they don't understand the

rules of voting. While there is undoubtedly some truth to this, it certainly belies the logic that Gerardo himself describes (he is one of the people I quoted in chapter 3), the same logic that drove his own participation in the previous campaign: the political fatalism generated and regenerated by state violence. It is not so much that many Mayan's fail to understand what voting is "supposed to be" in the abstract, but that their vote are informed by their own interpretation of the grim prospects of what voting can bring them. And, as I describe in chapter 2, many people who understand perfectly well the general principle behind voting, nonetheless have only a vague sense of historical political behavior of their own parents' generation.

ENSHRINING DEPOLITICIZATION

Central to this reconceptualization in terms of the individual is the notion of choice. Each of these is seen as some sort of personal failure or deficiency. Discourses of development focus exclusively on things that individuals can do differently to, supposedly, change their life conditions. Choice is central to the narrative of development introduced by DIGESA. Choice is also a central element in Arturo Bravo's narrative about those who did and those who did not participate. People choose to develop, and hence reap the rewards. Who is to blame? Only themselves. This account, very common among the 'capacitated' villagers I spoke to, reveals legitimate reasons why some people shied away from, or openly opposed the program. Given the context, however, villagers had little reason to trust the state and little precedence for believing in stories about *superación* through *capacidad*, especially when the attainment of these goals entailed serious financial risks, like losing land. Many were also unfamiliar with the kind of long-range planning these programs required, and getting involved meant a lot of effort, and a

trade off with other work. At the same time as he acknowledged the legitimacy of these factors, Arturo focuses more on their criticisms of the program. He also criticizes their negativism as short sighted. Of course, Arturo is reading history backward: having already seen that these programs were economically beneficial to those who participated, it is easy to stand in judgment of people who did not get involved early on. Nevertheless, these discourses emphasize individual choice ignore these factors.

In these discoures, choice is individualized. All solutions valorized by state programs focus on individual well being. There is no legitimate language recognized in these discourses for talking about collective action against poverty. In discourses of superación through capacidad, collective change results from individual transformations. A key theme of the prior struggles for development was a unified political struggle against Ladino oppression. The guerrilla narrative located revolutionary agency in collective armed confrontation with the state. Today, discussions of collective, unified political struggle have receded into the background. Unity is unimportant. Everyone develops for themselves and their families. One generation is tired of helping. One formerly active leader says that if he will do work as a community leader now, it will have to be for a salary.

Another element of these discourses is faith in scientific technology. Development discourses disseminate a veritable laundry list of options for enterprising individuals to find the route to success. Each of these describes a long-term path, usually involving some form of individual training and/or personal discipline (like savings, taking out credit, and strategic investment). By focusing on the fact that people have not followed these options, these discourses have shifted many a private conversation and many a public discussion away from themes of gross historic socio-economic inequality.

Although the state has officially withdrawn from many of the activities of development, the state continues to similar to the visions of "apolitical" development that informed DIGESA's programs on their affiliated NGOs. A source close to the Ladino leader of the most prominent local development organization in San Pedro told me that, in order for NGOs like that one to receive money from the state (they also look for international funding) they must submit to certain regulations regarding the kind of discourses they can engage it. For example, none of these groups can criticize the government, nor can they talk about systemic social inequalities outside of the terms laid out by notions of *capacidad*. Depoliticization through *capacidad* is the continued legacy of "apolitical" development, as political as ever. Furthermore, these notions of *capacidad* and discourses of *superación* provide the main conceptual tools that individuals, especially Ladinos, use to understand the causes of poverty, and the solutions that are sought. That these notions are commonsense—even articles of faith—among Ladinos Sampedranos is consistent with the analysis of the new cultural racism in Guatemala described by Hale (2006).

Depoliticization and Personal Status

Ferguson (1991) does not describe the role of individual agency in the perpetuation of these normalizing re-narrations of poverty, seeing it as the work of the "development machine." I think that the case of Los Altenses, especially the examples I have provided above, clarify that one of the reasons that depoliticizing discourses circulate is that they endow individuals who are less poor with a positive identity. Some individuals become invested in narratives that attribute their relative success to their innate intelligence, which explains their achievements. It appears that there emerged over time a politically decisive class of people invested in individualistic narratives of success.

Narratives focusing on individual intelligence and qualities were essential to their high status. Further evidence that depoliticizing discourses are tied to individual status claims can be seen in the behavior of Juan Jiménez. His regular assertions that other people do not know how to work, or are too lazy is a way for him to define himself through them in the negative. He is their opposite, a smart person. His identity as intelligent needs their failure to be a case of personal irresponsibility and backwardness. They fail for the same reason that he has succeeded.

The nature of this investment in discourses of becomes clearer the more closely we examine the different contexts in which they are used, and the different privileges that their utterances give to those who circulate them. Even if they retain notions of *superación* and discipline as abstract goals or ideals, many farmers who have not attained a high level of economic success, or who have had only fleeting success, regularly circulate narratives that discount the extent to which they themselves are responsible for their own poverty. Alfredo, in the interview with Pedro suggested that market agriculture means little to people with small amounts of land. Esteban's argument against Santos is another example. His marginal existence is a potent complaint against them. He accepts some responsibility, but not all. But his pleas go unheard. No one takes him seriously. In fact, he, like many others, is ridiculed. Neighbors are not totally unsympathetic. Santos offers him what he views as charity, but only on the condition of Esteban's accepting of some fairly restrictive conditions. Santos seems clearly to benefit from this arrangement. Offering Esteban an unused, and quite humble, house, costs him nothing. In return he gets cheap labor and guardianship of his land. Santos does not think for a second that Esteban has a point when he complains about money, or about the amount of work he has to do for Santos.

LACUNAE OF DEPOLITICIZING DISCOURSES

As we discussed in the last chapter, *superación* was indeed possible for some villagers who engaged with development programs in the early 1980s. Also, the narrative of DIGESA and subsequent modernization programs was vehemently anti-political, and proposed a individualistic, technocratic approach to poverty. But both of these important factors are still unable, alone, to explain the dominance among rural Mayans of explanation of poverty that focus on individual choice to the erasure of structural determinants. How has it been able to gain such headway in a village that is still quite poor, and increasingly economically insecure, and that, for whatever other differences they had with the guerrilla movement, been so receptive to structural explanations for poverty advanced by the revolutionary narrative?

The question of why people adhere to these discourses becomes more puzzling when compared to the unreliability and ephemerality of its promises. It would be wrong to deny that the advent of *capacitación* has had no effect on local poverty. Individual capacity development has been integrally in sending many notable individuals on an upward economic trajectory. For people who've made it far enough, their stories sometimes become legends, often repeated and held up as examples. However, program rhetoric aside, the promise of prosperity through market agriculture has fallen far short. Almost no villager grows vegetables introduced by DIGESA for sale in local markets. The main reason for that being that so many people have these crops now that the prices received are too low. One farmer pointed out that, in his village, non-traditional agriculture did not work for tomatoes—the cash crop deemed by agronomists to be best suited to the local climate and altitude— because there was no way to get irrigation. The few families who do sell buy a vegetable in quantity from other vendors and sell in the market. Two female heads of household, both married to men who are considered to be

among the most *capacitado* in the village sell small tamales in the market. The long term situation in Los Altenses gives depth to the USAID self assessment, discussed in the previous chapter, that revealed that the actual affect on peasant production as a result of cooperative movement was negligible to the point of being immeasurable, or perhaps negative. Regardless of whatever variables that might have led to these results that so perplexed program directors, the long-term effects diverge substantially from their original aims. If one takes into account, as one must, that one of the main problems confronted by local farmers is dependency on overly expensive chemical inputs, none of which work in the way that they were originally intended and advertised—the outcomes must be seen as a net loss, a temporary solution at best.

Another reason why the fact of *superación* itself does not explain the current dominance of depoliticizing conceptions of poverty is that there is no necessary relationship between *superación* and responsible behavior, as mandated by discourses of *capacidad*. Did people considered *capacitado* by themselves and others work harder, make smarter decisions, have more disciplined, save their money? Not as far as I could tell. They drink as much as many people who are not considered *capacitado* do, even if they are not ridiculed or condemned for it in the same manner. In fact, from what I saw, they work less, and tend to hire cheap labor to maintain their larger fields. (People with money who drink are made fun of, but not condemned in the same moral terms, or with as much disdain, as those who are poor and drink. Although critics acknowledge that many poor people drink out of sadness.) In fact, at least in the village where I lived, several of the men who are most associated with the term "*capacidad*" were the ones who drank the most, or the most often, in public cantinas. The idea that this group's success is related to their intelligence is likewise questionable. Many do know more than the others regarding certain things, some of which can give them an income. But these differences

do not account, in most cases, for an individuals' wealth or poverty. The largest factor determining individual wealth is not *capacitación*, but the luck of inheritance, namely productive land for corn and coffee. One of the wealthiest Mayan man in Los Altenses cannot read or write, but does own upwards of 100 *cuerdas* of coffee. They were able to buy land when it was cheap, and convert it slowly to coffee land. He never even worked with DIGESA. Another way that wealth is produced is from having a child in the US who sends money. The next most common source of wealth in the villages is having some sort of job that pays a wage, either as a teacher, or in some other government position, especially in the municipal building. Beneath that is driving people in a truck. Most villagers grow only coffee for the market. Alternative crops were incredibly rare. Only a few individuals had honey for sale and even Juan had yet to plant the papayas that sweetened his dreams of success.

Moreover, following the recommendations of the discourses of *capacidad* does not guarantee economic well being. This has become increasingly apparent to many exasperated and worried villagers. On a hot afternoon in Los Altenses, I sat with Oscar Mejia, a 54 year old Protestant man, in the shade of the patio outside of his son's home. With a lovely view of the valley below, including the road into the town on the other side of the valley, Oscar spoke to me at great length about his agricultural practices. At one point in our conversation, Oscar, clearly exasperated, and with more than a little embarrassment, began to recount to me about how he had taken out a loan that he was unable to pay. In default, BANRURAL, the Rural Bank (formerly the Rural Development Bank BANDESA) reclaimed most of his productive acreage for coffee. This was eight years ago, he told me, stating that he would not use credit any longer for this reason. At the same time, he reasoned that the rural farmers in San Pedro simply do not have the *ciencia* (science) necessary to grow crops, and if this is why they are poor.

He has heard that in the US, they really know how to grow big tomatoes, the kind that draw good prices in the market, and that they are smarter. He asked my opinion about his coffee: are they not growing it correctly? He is deeply concerned with the fact that there is not enough money to fertilize his coffee appropriately. He also told me that *"no one has any money anymore for fertilizer."* His *milpa* does not give enough food for the entire family the whole year. What is striking here is that, although the failure of scientific and market agriculture is apparent, Oscar, like many farmers, still hold onto the dream. Despite the abstract and somewhat unattainable qualities of both *capacitación* and *superación*, their existence as references to a dream that never came true, these dreams permeate life and are the shared stuff of everyday conversations between rural villagers. Nevertheless, new desperate economic realities are leading to widespread frustration, and abandonment of notions of *superación*. There is also evidence that outright dissent is growing.

NEOLIBERALISM

There is some evidence to suggest that notions of *capacidad* and *superación* have shaped popular opinion regarding the desirability of neoliberal economic policies, specifically the Free Trade Agreement. In 2004, the Free Trade Agreement was under consideration, and it was obvious the government intended to ratify it. The *Prensa Libre* was filled almost daily with articles in the business section and op-ed pieces proclaiming its benefits, with the occasional dissenting article. As the debates became more intense, and as leftist organizations began to criticize them, even *Nuestro Diario*—a daily newspaper with lots of pictures aimed at the poor and working class—had a pullout feature, complete with cartoon drawings of farmers, bankers, factory owners and business

people, describing how Free Trade would benefit everyone as it made the Guatemalan economy grow.

Gregorio, or 'Goyo' is a young Mayan professional, a new husband and father. He has worked as a school-teacher, and who in 2004 was working as a technician for a local development organization. I would visit their office frequently, because their young office staff was knowledgeable about local politics, and gossip, and interested in answering my questions to further my the research, and always just as interested in whatever I might have learned, or information that I might have to share with them. One day I asked Goyo what he thought about the TLC. At the time, he was fairly unaware of my relationship to CEIBA, or my own convictions about the matter. He said, matter of fact manner, that: "*Mexico has a free trade agreement. And Mexico is a developed country. The United States has a free trade agreement. And the United States is a developed country. Guatemala also needs a free trade agreement.*" In order to be developed, you have to follow the example of the developed countries. Guatemala must follow the basic pattern. This was, for him, the only logical conclusion. It was obvious he had given this some thought prior to our conversation, although he had probably not followed the debates as closely as many others in the town. But he was not alone.

Every market day, several men would sit and talk in front of a *tienda* that was on the edge of the bustling market, watching to see, as one man told me, *"lo que caiga"* (whatever happens, literally whatever 'falls'). Oftentimes, I would join them in their conversations, which many times were nothing but a series of jokes, many of them quite scandalous. But many times the conversations would address, albeit in the same irreverent manner, serious political topics. One of the participants, an outspoken iconoclast and former military supporter, Carlos Solis, a Mayan man in his late 60s was always interested in sharing his quite eccentric and improbable opinions on matters as

diverse as the science behind the spread of AIDS, the sexual behavior of *gringas,* to the economic impacts of buying *ropa Americana* (used clothing, 'donated' from the US, but sold in local markets). He asked me one day what I thought about Free Trade. Was it really so bad? He thought it was probably for the best. I told him that many people were afraid that it would undercut the local corn market by flooding Guatemala with genetically modified corn from government subsidized farms in the US—a fact as far as I knew. He said that that would be fine with him. He said he would just stop growing corn. It was no problem. If corn was cheap, he might even save money. When I asked him if he was worried about the farmers who make their living selling corn. He said he was not. "They can do something else," he explained, as unclear as I was about what that something else might be, if somewhat less concerned.

LOSING FAITH IN *SUPERACIÓN*

Despite the prevalence and moral authority of discourses of *superación* and *capacidad* in discussions of poverty, there is evidence to suggest that widespread dissent from these views is on the rise, as the promises of *superación* through development have left more and more people empty-handed. The collapse of the coffee economy has been the greatest factor. When I arrived to San Pedro, many farmers not even bother to fertilize their coffee—a move tantamount to giving up on coffee harvest for the year because the coffee will hardly produce anything without fertilizers. Fertilizer costs were too high, and coffee required too much care to make it worth it. Belts were tightened. The primary economic alternative at this point is immigration to the US or Mexico to work for higher wages. But of course these are not available to everyone. The result is widespread frustration and rising disillusionment with the idea of superacion as a route to social mobility.

Indeed, the sense that economic failure is inevitable is nowhere more obvious than in the practice of migration. The collapse of subsistence agriculture, and the hopelessness of market agriculture combine to drive migration. I did not talk to a single person between the ages of 18-40 who has not at one point seriously considered a trip to the United States. The number of people that have actually attempted, or have done it, is astounding; the absence of young men and women in the village in those age ranges is quite visible in many of the villages.

Desperation over economic conditions manifests in other ways. The main one is alcohol use. Most of the people I met who engaged in excessive, chronic alcohol consumption of the variety that others saw as risking personal health—the number one activity that people condemn as a individual bringing poverty down on their own heads—told me that they drank as much as they did because of how sad they were about their poverty. This sadness does not only result in alcoholism, although this and religion are the two most frequent means through which unhappiness and despair is palliated. Farmer suicides, while not rampant in San Pedro, are too frequent to keep track of easily. Several villagers in Los Altenses had died after drinking *gramoxone* (paraquat)—the chemical herbicide. Drinking *gramoxone* is almost always fatal, and is a horribly painful way to die. *Gramoxone* consumption is always associated with drunkenness, but also always to misfortune. These are individual acts of resistance, symptoms of a social order gone awry. Some of them are literal cries for help. Unfortunately, these are among the most disempowered forms that resistance can take. We must see them as collective cries for help from the margins of the neoliberal economy.

In a less dramatic form, villagers resist the individualist focus of discourses of *capacidad* through stealing. Stealing is common in villages, and has been on the rise in recent years. I am referring here to relatively small-scale theft of valuable household

goods. Most common is chickens from a family coop. These take months to raise and are worth between Q75 and Q100. When coffee is ready to harvest, one man told me, some villagers go and pick their neighbors' coffee at night. "*People here are* tremenda!" (have a lot of *chutzpah*). Stealing fresh ripe corn off the stalk is common. One man who has had this happen to him on a number of occasions complained, *"And it's not like they take the small ones, either!"* In one village, the problem was so bad that women on their way back from the gas run corn mill would have the *masa* stolen from their heads. It is easy to understand why tempers flare; their neighbors are stealing food from their mouths. But what leaves one mouth certainly goes into another hungry one.

Despite the failure of individual capacity development to lift Mayan villagers out of poverty, and the growing dissent from this model, no other alternative has emerged to take its place. This dissent has not, at least not in a fully articulated way, made itself into a political refusal of the failure of market economics, especially not one that resonates with a large number of Mayans. Most Sampedrano Mayans remain distant from leftist movements. Few villagers attend protests, or even know the issues. Resistance to *capacidad* has taken other forms, some of which have been discussed here, another of which will be discussed in the next chapter about political divisions, and support for the FRG.

CRITICAL DISCOURSES ON FREE TRADE

In their postwar manifestation, leftist organizations routinely predict disaster from neoliberal economic policies. In many ways, their opposition to Free Trade has overtaken their emphasis on the Peace Accords They claim that transgenic corn will do damage to health and to local crops, and are just plain unnatural and wrong. They say that this will make poor people poorer. Many Sampedrano Mayans participated in

protests of the TLC in March 2005. There, the National Police and the army opened fire on an unarmed crowd with live ammunition and teargas. Their justification for the removal was that the group was breaking the law by blocking the highway.[3] One Mayan man from Colotenango was shot and killed and over a dozen were gravely wounded. One man had his leg amputated. A schoolteacher from San Pedro, the son of an indigenous leader who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered during the war, was shot and still has a bullet lodged in his arm because it was too close to the artery for the doctors to remove. Farmers that work with CEIBA are almost universally opposed to the TLC and transgenics.

As a result, many Sampedranos are skeptical about free trade. Despite the fact that they have maintained their distance from leftist political organizations, and know few specific details about international trade law, they do know the general outline of leftist criticisms. Although they might object to their methods, they commonly listen to their discourses and generally believe them. For things that are a clear threat to the community, and have not yet been marked in local consciousness as an issue that is "off limits" for democratic input. Mining is the best, most current example of this. Most people oppose mining. San Pedro, like the rest of Huehuetenango, is heavily concessioned to mining companies. For better or worse, attached to the Free Trade Agreement was to make and honor these concessions. Villagers re-united en masse to block the roads that the mining companies

CONCLUSION

Discourses of *capacidad* caught on among rural Mayans for several reasons. In the 1970s, discourses of development provided a positive outlet for Mayan desires for well-being. For many Mayan farmers, *capacidad* represented a slow but steady path out

of poverty and also of equality with Ladinos, whose superiority has increasingly been based on their possession of an objectively higher level of *capacidad*. They had the status as an alternative to militarism, but one that whose existence was allowed by military institutions. Later, they became the moral underpinning for Mayan political challenges against Ladinos in the 1980s. They also play an important part in maintaining individuals' status as '*capacitado*' '*superado*' or 'professional.' Mayans were not passive recipients of *capacidad*. They reimagined the term to make it consistent with their desires for political empowerment. But elevating the quest for *capacidad* to the level of battle cry for a new politics has some severe limitations. First, discourses of *capacitación* make full citizenship contingent on adopting certain set of normalized behaviors and practices. These discourses blame poverty and political exclusion on individual choice to remain backward, and to not avail themselves to new technologies and forms of training. This framework justifies the grinding poverty that affects the vast majority of villagers. It places no importance on the fact that some people enjoy disproportionate access to the means of *capacidad* than others. Many Sampedranos, Ladinos and Mayans, but far more Mayans than Ladinos, cannot afford to educate themselves, or their children past middle school. These solutions do not address the fundamental contradictions of a social order that depends upon the racialized marginalization of indigenous populations. This raises an important question: When Mayans struggle to be equal to a Ladino, to what extent, and in what moments, does that struggle include an attempt to lay claim to their conception of themselves as *"mas que un indio"*? This highlights a dilemma for Mayan politics: In order to be legitimate, Mayans must frame their politics in terms of *capacitación*. Yet, *capacidad* tends to legitimate the very inequalities of the social order that Mayans originally adopted it to combat.

Discourses of *capacidad* contradict some of the fundamental elements of the revolutionary narrative: the focus on collective struggle to overcome poverty that was generated by vast social inequalities. Now, it is up to individuals to struggle to improve their life projects. General social inequalities, while troubling, have no collective solution, and, moreover, people themselves are to blame for their own poverty. *Capacidad* provided a new set of narratives and explanations for economic failure that focused on what types of normalized behavior they do or do not engage it, what technologies they do or do not use. These explanations became popular not because they describe an objective reality—the one where *capacidad* is available to everyone equally and anyone who pursues the path of *capacidad* can expect economic success—but because they provided positive identities for Mayans who were not poor, who could think of their relative good fortune as a result of their own hard work and inherent intelligence of wisdom. It probably also shields them from having to face the staggering poverty that is all around them, and that indeed is growing.

I am not arguing that these depoliticized explanations have completely replaced villagers' understandings of political economy. As I tried to demonstrate in the chapter about the MOSCAMED conspiracy, these still hold broad sway. However, these discourses no longer hold the monopoly on explaining poverty. Development has carved out an important niche. The relative status of these two discourses is in question. Perhaps it is because it appears that there is simply no way to act on national-level political inequalities, these problems have become, in a way, irrelevant to many villagers involved in the political processes. As discussed in the previous chapter, if we take Arturo's narrative to be indicative of villagers' attitudes towards the DIGESA when it arrived, then types of depoliticizing mechanisms were not in operation at that time. In this chapter, I am present evidence that indicates the developmentalist explanation has gained

substantial ground. It was especially prevalent among the previous generation of Mayan leaders, a generation whose ascendance has possibly peaked. Many members of this group explain Mayan participation in the revolutionary movement as a result of their lack of *capacidad*, and hence their ignorance. Moreover, there is considerable evidence to suggest that this value shift could color widespread perception Neoliberal economic policies, which strongly emphasizes the possibilities for individual economic advancement represented by the free market.

It is reasonable to assume that without the threat of state violence, would Mayans have taken their re-working of *capacitación* further. One very large possibility is that Mayans might have demanded that notions of *capacidad* take into account the unequal access to *capacidad*. Mayans are well aware that there is a difference in the ability for Mayans and Ladinos to afford schooling. But Mayans have not, as far as I know, used this disparity as an argument against the neutral application of the standard set by *capacidad*. They have not argued, for example, for the rights of a lesser-capacitated Mayan to hold political office or a job before an equally or slightly more capacitated Ladino as a partial remedy for historic inequalities. Beyond state violence, the fact that the state curtails discourses of development from speaking about the wide-ranging political alternatives does not improve the possibilities that Mayans will imagine these alternatives. It is at least probable that Mayan leaders would never have accepted it as a replacement for revolutionary politics if it were not for violence. If they were not so socially marginalized, they would also probably be more critical of the western norms embedded within the term. In the next chapter, we will discuss how some Mayans have criticized the forms of discrimination between Mayans legitimated by discourses of *capacidad*.

These arguments clarifies the ways in which notions of *capacidad* and *superación* reveal the deep ambiguities associated with the military state's conception of the '*Indio permitido'* (sanctioned Indian). Their limitations show the inability of these bounded norms for behavior to contain Mayan desires for economic advancement and security. These are therefore extremely dangerous for Mayan goals of economic well-being and autonomy. Mayans, like subaltern populations around the world, have becoming jaded about the alternatives for prosperity offered by neoliberalism. They recognize them as horribly incomplete. Yet they do not have the illusion that something will eventually work out. The dream attached to neoliberalism seems to have clearly faded for many, although some still support CAFTA. For the moment, villagers are torn between two divergent ways of conceptualizing poverty and differentiation, and the contents of "Mayan" politics. This is, in many ways, a moral conflict. It concerns when a person's exclusion is to be justified and ratified, and not a cause for alarm. This debate is crucial; it is at the heart of the question of what direction Mayan politics could and should take. The primary participants in this discussion will be the new generation, the young professionals. This dissertation is written with them in mind as the principal audience.

NOTES

[1] This is distinct from work that explores market ideologies in the rural highlands. Goldin (1993) argues that uneven development in the western highlands results from differing market ideologies and occupational change and that it leads to political divisions within and between townships. Goldin examines only the developed core, near larger cities and market systems. My research investigates the programs and techniques used to spread new economic ideas and create marketable skills and it explores the grassroots impact of these ideas and opportunities on the practices and conceptions characteristic of Mayan political organizations. Additionally, by focusing on Huehuetenango, it reveals how these processes work in less-integrated areas more typical of the highlands.

[2] For a recent study of women's role in town governments, see *Mujeres en gobiernos municipals en Guatemala: relaciones del genero y poder en las corporaciones municipales*. Merida, Alba Cecilia. Antigua: Ediciones del Pensativo. 2005.
[3] Both police and military claimed they were fired on first, and only defended themselves. Dozens of eyewitnesses reports, and video tape, show otherwise.

Chapter Eight: A Revolt Against *Capacidad*?

At its core, *capacidad* is a form of discrimination, a way of making legitimate distinction between persons based on 'neutral' and 'objective' criteria. The last chapter described how notions of *capacidad* formed an important part of the conditions of possibility for Mayan political resurgence and at the same time profoundly reshaped conceptions of social inequality and political alternatives that had informed previous struggles. This chapter examines the effects of notions of *capacidad* on internal village politics. I argue that understanding contemporary divisions in the village of Los Altenses, as well as support for the FRG by several key individuals, do not make sense without an appreciation of how discourses of *capacidad* have re-shaped local identities. Specifically, I show how discourses of capacidad fostered local forms of discrimination against Mayans considered '*capacitados'* as well as a monopoly on village leadership positions for those with more experience and training.

In the vacuum of authority and uncertainty generated by decades of turmoil, religious conversion, and economic transformation, development committees and political parties emerged as the center of authority in village life. *Capacidad* became a requirement for almost every position of community leadership. It displaced other forms of authority. In Los Altenses, new norms for community leadership based on *capacidad* created conflicts for leadership status among people who 'did' and people who 'did' not meet this standard. Lesser-*capacitated* people, despite their weaknesses, still want to be seen as community leaders. They also wanted to be treated with respect. This led several 'lesser *capacitated'* and somewhat opportunistic village men who desired, but were

regularly denied, leadership positions, to join the FRG, where they were treated with respect and materially rewarded. These village-level divisions and intra-Mayan divisions dovetailed with an FRG strategy to recruit leaders whose relative lack of political training, experience, and ability to *gestionar* (negotiate) projects led them to be denied access to leadership roles and power in Mayan political organizations. The FRG will take anyone so long as he is an indigenous person with enough charisma to win the election. In the case of these leaders, FRG populism resonates with many rural Mayans not so much for their alliance with the people in opposition to the power bloc, but because it takes their side against their neighbors who have abused them in the past.

SHIFTING POLITICAL ALLIANCES IN LOS ALTENSES

Most residents of los Altenses belong to one of three extended families who have lived in the *aldea* since its founding at the end of the 19th century: the Ruíz, Morales and Lopez. There are several other much smaller families, all but two of which have moved to the *aldea* in recent years. Each of these three main extended family groups is comprised of several dozen households, many of which include members from far beyond the nuclear family. Large family units live, roughly, in distinct geographical zones that have specific names. All the families are Christian, and most members of the Bravo and Ruíz families are AC Catholics, or new Catholics. Most of the Lopez are evangelicals. There are several Pentecostals in the village, as well as one family of Jehovah's Witnesses. In addition to being neighbors, the three central extended families are closely interrelated through various marriages.

Internal governing structures of Mayan communities have been in flux for decades. In the 1960s, cash cropping, schooling and economic stratification led to increasing frustration with both village level hierarchies and the Ladino power on which

these forms were dependent (Brintnall 1979). Desire to be independent of the cult of ancestor worship led by village Elders, the responsibilities and economic expenditures associated with the *cofradía*, and town Ladinos led economically modernizing groups to convert to Catholicism or Protestantism. By the mid-1960s, traditional forms of authority were all but gone, and most villagers had given up on *costumbre* and converted to 'religion'. A new, younger group of leaders, committed to economic modernization and education displaced traditional hierarchies as the village authority. Members of this group, especially the new Catholics, were more likely to participate in development projects, cash cropping, cooperatives, and political parties and also tended to be economically advanced above their neighbors. Modernizing Catholics were also the same groups who were most responsive to the guerrilla's message, and worked to gain followings in Mayan villages. These complex processes have followed a general pattern and is described by several anthropologists (Brintnall 1979, Falla 1978, Warren 1978).

Events in Los Altenses follow the general outlines of this story. The Bravo family was the most active in Catholic Action. The Lopez family was the first to convert to Protestantism, and did so *en masse*. Members of the Ruíz family, along with a smaller family in the village, were the last to convert to Christianity. The Bravo family had a greater amount of wealth, mostly in land, compared to other families in the village. Due to their association with the Church, and their relative abundance of land, leaders of the Bravo family were the most active participants in the agricultural cooperatives in the 1960s and 1970s. They were the first to turn a substantial part of their milpa over to coffee, the first to use new chemical fertilizers and the first to take advantage of the favorable loans offered by the cooperatives. This is consistent with Brintnall's analysis in that that the reach of these early cooperatives was fairly small, and only the wealthiest villagers were able to take advantage of new technology and loans (p. 154-157). These

processes were likely responsible for increasing their economic position relative to other families. Whatever the specifics, it is clear that both *capacidad* and wealth were unequally distributed among community members by the early 1980s, heavily favoring the Bravo family.

The main distinction between the processes in Los Altenses and the current understanding of Catholic Action is that while the Bravo family was involved with the Church and receptive to the guerrilla message, their response was more guarded. It was the members of the Ruíz family, the 'late' converts to new Catholicism, who were the most enthusiastic about the revolution. Several trained as combatants. Still, both families were united in their support for political reform. The Bravo were more interested in development. They were more active in the cooperative movement and also in DIGESA. As seen in chapter 5, the Ruíz family's participation in DIGESA was motivated by their perception that the program was associated with political reform. The Bravo were probably more interested in the guerrilla movement because of its association with their local struggles for development. The Lopez family participated in neither the guerrilla nor DIGESA, leaving them out of this unity.

During and after the years of guerrilla presence in the village, the Ruíz and the Lopez family were further divided because of the murder of Juan Lopez. Juan Lopez, one of the earliest converts to evangelicalism in the village, a *contratista* for the *fincas*, and a military commissioner was assassinated in his home in 1983. He was killed at night one day after he had spoken out against community members, and the Ruíz family specifically, for participating with the guerrilla, citing the Romans verse 13 that says that the law of the land is established by God, and should not be opposed. Members of the Lopez family with whom I spoke, including his sons and his grandsons, insist that members of the Ruíz family were responsible for the death, although there were no

witnesses. Others who were friends of the deceased suggest that it might not have been for speaking out. They suggest another motive for the murder might have been to get out of debts owed to Juan Lopez related to his work as a *contratista* (labor contractor) for the plantations. For many of the reasons discussed in chapter 2, as well as to avoid implication in this killing, the Ruíz deny any involvement in Lopez' death, and in the guerrilla movement in general. They also voice a great deal of resentment at being called guerrillas.

Despite their religious differences and ideological divisions during the war, the Bravo and Lopez families have been united politically for the last 23 years. Much of this has to do with the fact that, after the violence, members of the Bravo family actively taught what they had learned from DIGESA, and ideas in general about *superacion* to members of the Lopez family who were willing to learn. Since the war, religious differences are not politically inflected in Los Altenses. Although there was a division between the Bravo and the Ruíz family over the displacement of Alfonso Ruíz by Arturo Bravo for the leader of DIGESA, this division seems to have relaxed, at least enough for the both families to be united to support the first candidacy of Natanael and José Antulio Morales in 1993. The division between the Ruíz and the Lopez over the killing of Juan Lopez likewise seems to have been resolved enough for the Ruíz and Lopez, despite some misgivings, to form a political union together with the Bravo family.

Today, instead of united with the Bravo, the Ruíz are isolated from both the Lopez and Bravo. Almost the entire Ruíz family, the small families, and members from all the other families voted for the FRG. Why, given ideological unity during the war, and religious unity, did Ruíz and Bravo families divide in the years following the worst of the armed conflict? How could a family with such deep identification with the *lucha*

de los pobres support the FRG? What does this have to do with the circulation of discourses of development?

CAPACIDAD AND COMPETITION FOR LEADERSHIP

Under the cofradía system, men in the village occupied leadership positions annually, and for a year term. Individuals can serve twice, but almost everyone served at least one time in their lives. Elders had a higher status than youth, and a council of elders made decisions that applied to the entire village. Since the disruption of cofradía authority, and ancestor worship by the actions of the Catholic Church in the 1950s and 60s, village leadership positions "depended neither on age nor on service in the village hierarchies" (Brintnall 1979, 147). A much younger group of community members emerged as leaders. The new major division was between Catholics and Protestants, the former being of a higher economic class. Writing about Aguacatan, Brintnall was unclear what was to replace the hierarchies:

> The fall of the hierarchies, in short, represented more of a negative statement about the character of the new order than a positive one—the old will not dominate the young, nor the Ladinos the Indians, and the ethnic groups will not be united as in the past. In retrospect, it is clear that the churches actualized this new order only partially, and other institutions were soon to take root among the Aguacatecs, creating a new public framework for Indian social life. (149)

He focuses on schools, agricultural cooperatives, political parties, and peasant leagues as new sources of community authority. Each outside institution had its own local correlative affiliate: the bilingual educator; the catecist; the labor organizer; and the party representative. There is a diffusion of village authority, linked to outside groups and institutions. The war soon shut down many of these spaces, targeting bilingual educators, catecists, labor organizers, and politically active Mayans. This was certainly the pattern of violence in San Pedro Necta. What remained active, and a form of authority

downplayed by Brintnall, is that of the development committee leader. It was due to the bottleneck of community level village level authority onto development that DIGESA inserted a set of neutral standards for community leadership. In addition tonew forms of training and practical expertise in the field of agriculture, local leaders of DIGESA programs received specialized training that was to prove incredibly important in coming years: how to petition for infrastructural development projects through state institutions.

By this time, as discussed in the last chapter, capacidad had completely redefined the norms of leadership. Community leadership depended on ones ability to *gestionar* projects from development projects from state institutions, and—at least by 1985 if not before—from political parties. Even if there were not that many projects actually awarded until the Peace Accords, there were more than ever before and certainly seemed to be worth the effort to pursue for Mayan villagers.

During the war, community development committees were all subordinated to the civil patrol system. Village business became orchestrated by the civil patrols, who held regular meetings. Participation was mandatory. When I asked if he thought the civil patrol system was useful or necessary, Arturo Bravo explained:

> For a part. It was always necessary. There were always people who took advantage [of the situation] in that time. Many people don't want to help the community. But when the patrollers were there, that's when all of them people got together. Whoever did not show up, commits a crime or gets punished. All of the people got more organized. There was more respect in the entire community. Whatever happens, the people are there united. But there was a bad side to the patrols too. We always lost a lot of time. Always, even to our crops. All work was left abandoned.

While villagers remember the suffering associated with the civil patrols, many recognized and appreciated this was a time of great, perhaps unheralded unity. After the patrols had been established and villagers had stopped participating with the guerrilla, they were afraid of the army and the guerrilla both. The civil patrol system represented their

protection from any risks associated with being with either side. Of course, being in the middle was difficult as well, and participating in the patrol was technically on the side of the army, but being as it was a mandatory, and that villagers continued to protect their neighbors that were involved in the guerrilla movement, the civil patrollers helped them to achieve this aim. Not all villagers liked it. But anyone who did not comply with the patrols was beaten up by the villagers themselves or imprisoned in a makeshift cell, forced to sleep in the cold. In addition to unity and relative protection, the patrols forced people to "help the community." One of the major items of business at patroller meetings was development. By 1984, the community had received its first project. INFOM (National Institution of Development) potable water tubed in from a source in a distant village. Other projects were in different state of planning and negotiation with state institutions.

In Los Altenses, two families dominated the patrols: the modernizing Catholics and Evangelicals opposed to the guerrilla movement. The evangelical Lopez identified most with the mission of the patrols. But the leaders of the Lopez family knew little about development. Modernizing Catholics in the Bravo family moved quickly to take an active role in the patrols. The Bravo disavowed the guerrilla movement, and claimed their neighbors, the Ruíz family, late converts to the new Catholicism and not heavily associated with modernization, were the ones who were more fully *entregado* (given over) to the guerrilla. Because the business of the civil patrols was so closely associated with development, the Bravo soon established their leadership role in the community through the patrol system. In chapter 5, I discussed how the Bravo taught the Lopez how to negotiate development projects and also about modern agriculture. By the late 1980s, the community development committees were dominated by these two families.[1] Between these two families, it was the Bravo family that had the most authority, which

was no doubt reinforced by their relative wealth, which was steadily increasing in these years. It was these leaders that called meetings and who spoke at them. They also served as liasons between political parties and the community members.

At the time, it is unlikely that the members of the Ruíz family objected to their neighbors' monopoly on community leadership. When I discovered that most of the members of the Ruíz family were about to leave for the coast to work on the coffee harvest, I focused my efforts on this part of the community. One of the first people that I spoke with at length was Diego Ruíz. Diego is a young man, about 28 at the time of my fieldwork. He has three young children, all under the age of 5. He lives far north in the village, on a small plot of land. He has 4 *cuerdas* of coffee, and when we met it was agreed that I would help him or cut limbs off the pine trees that were shading his plot. Diego is one of the few Ruíz who holds a *cargo* in the village. As a health promoter, Diego coordinates with the local development agencies in their monthly clinical visits, in addition to providing health material and information to community members, and in some cases, first aid. Accepting the position was not an easy decision for Diego, as he explained:

> How afraid I was, what fear! When they named me to the committee. "Could I capable?" I asked myself. After the first workshop reunion of capacitación for promoters, again, what fear! But little by little, the fear went away. Now I've been the health promoter for the sector for five years.

It seems a lack of capacidad led to reticence among many people with less *capacidad* and experience to participate in the development committees. This general pattern still exists today. More members of both Bravo and Lopez participate on development committees.

CAPACIDAD AND DISCRIMINATION

At the same time that norms for *capacidad* were becoming crucial to village leadership, they were helping to create a form of discrimination against people who were not *capacitados*. Rodrigo Ruíz, the leader of the Ruíz family, was routinely disrespected by Marcos Bravo, the political leader of the Bravo family and a close friend and political associate of José Antulio Morales. I found out more about these when I spoke with Rodrigo's oldest son, Carlos. Carlos is a teacher who works for PRONADE on a contract basis. He is 33, and has a wife and a young child. We met at his newly constructed house, built with money he made from teaching in a village that, luckily for him, was, although almost seven kilometers away, was still within walking distance of Los Altenses. Unlike many teachers who must live in the schoolhouse or in some rented house with other teachers in the villages where work, Carlos is able to make the walk each day and spend the nights with his wife, the sharp witted and industrious Lucia. He was proud of the new house, after living in cramped quarters with his parents. Still, the house was a short walk to his parent's home, which helped Lucia, who, whenever she needed a trip to town unencumbered with her newborn child, could leave them with her mother in law, with whom she seemed to have a war relationship. The different forms of discrimination in Los Altenses were the primary theme of my Saturday afternoon conversation with Carlos. He talked about the times before schooling, which he knew only as a memory:

> Before there were people who although they had not gone to school, but still more or less knew a little. Plenty. But now education is a great advantage. A person without a juridical education, I see a lot of illiterate people. If you give them a piece of paper in the hand, they can't read it. This means a cloth is blinding their eyes.

Carlos points to an appreciation of a form of intelligence and value not associated with *capapcidad*, people "still more or less knew a little." Adopting a somber tone, Carlos then laments how his father was made fun of for being lesser developed than other villagers:

> But sometimes there are insults. I realized because of my father. Before, before, he was very poor. He didn't have any possibilities to buy something for the week or to dress us, his children. Over time, [they would say] Don Rodrigo is ignorant, he's an indio [an Indian]. That word already died. Yes, it was used between families. He [Don Rodrigo] gave this some thought. "My children are not going to be like me." Through the insult, my father began to analyze. [Rodrigo said] "Thank you for making fun of me. This is going to be an idea for me, an experience."

This story, alongside the fear of committee participation expressed by Diego, demonstrates an internalization of the norm of *capacidad* among the less capacitated villagers. It also exemplifies again how discourses of development recode individual economic differences and misfortune as an individual failure. When he told me that the word "*indio*" was used among the same people, I was taken aback. Later, I asked Humberto to clarify what he meant that the word, as he put it, had "died." He said that the use had become prevalent in the 80s, but was no longer used, ever since the signing of the Peace Accords. Apparently, the Accords, which included a substantial section on the rights of indigenous people, had provoked a rethinking of ethnic discrimination locally, as registered in the stoppage of the local usage of the term. This refusal to assign a negative identity to "Indianness" points to a key moment in the process of transformation of Mayan identity, or *Mayanización* (Bastos and Camus 2003). When I asked him what he thought about these criticisms, not surprisingly he told me he was not in agreement:

> Let's go for the constitution of the republic. One person cannot be less than another. Many times there is ridicule or discrimination. But if we go with the law, the person has value. Some people always say, 'You don't have capacidad,

> you have no schooling.' But for me this is illogical. It's not good to say to a person that [they] don't matter. It's very illogical.

But to what extent these types of racializing categories have disappeared remains uncertain. It seems clear that these continue to operate, in a disguised way, through terms such as *capacidad*, which always seems to have had an "Indian" somewhere hidden inside it, as an opposite that it was always trying to escape, but could nonetheless never leave completely behind. *Capacidad* creating the conditions under which Mayans could be equal to Ladinos. This opens space for equality, supposedly, for a few people who most closely assimilate to these goals. But at the same time it justifies discrimination against the majority of indigenous people on a "legitimate" basis. People who have less training or studies have less value or importance. Even if the word '*indio'* is no longer acceptable, it is the fantasm conjured up by capacidad as its inferior opposite. In order to be capacitated, some people have to play the role of non-capacitated. Identities invested in notions of capacidad are invested in the naming of others.

Importantly, in this re-telling of events, neither Don Rodrigo nor Carlos disputes the relative advantage of the superior level of *capacidad* of members of the Bravo family. The only stand that they took was to insight that making fun of people with less *capacidad* is wrong. In fact in this story discrimination turned out to be an important impetus for the universalization of norms established by discourses on *capacidad*. It does not call into question the validity of the norm itself.

One memory looms particularly large in local discussions of political divisions. About 20 years ago at a town meeting, José Antulio, who by this time had already started his entry into local politics by this time, after hearing that Rodrigo Ruíz had just had another son, quipped, *"Don Rodrigo has another son? Fantastic. Now I will have another* mozo *(peon)."* This joke, obviously incredibly offensive, not just to Don

Rodrigo, but to the Ruíz family, was picked up on by members of the Bravo family. Without a doubt, Don Rodrigo emerges as the victim in this story, and a heroic victim who learns from a bad situation. His sons still remember this moment as defining family divisions in Los Altenses.

The discrimination against Rodrigo is only one example. The entire family has been cast as "backwards." Today, these forms of discrimination are the main reason why the leaders of the Ruíz family do not want to participate in any kind of alliance that involved the Bravo family, or José Antulio Morales. According to other members of the Ruíz family, the Lopez participate equally in discrimination. Rodrigo, the leader of the Ruíz family, had worked on Natanael's campaign, united with the other villagers. It is remarkable that the Ruíz and Lopez families were able to work together, given the bitter accusations of murder of Juan Lopez.

THE RUÍZ FAMILY

This new standard benefited the Bravo family and their allies in the Lopez family at the expense of the exclusion of the Ruíz family. The Ruíz family, whose leaders were less educated and who had mostly withdrawn from the DIGESA program after Arturo Bravo wrested control of the village representative position from Rodrigo Ruíz, was marginalized from leadership positions. Other non-capacitated men were similarly excluded. Despite their recognition of the relative experiences of other villagers in garnering projects, and even those who excluded themselves from participating in committees, many village men did not give up their aspirations for leadership, and the respect that came with it. Certainly not all men with 'lower level of capacidad' were fearful of participation. This generated political divisions.

The role of these forms of discrimination in generating political divisions in Los Altenses became apparent in my first meeting with the Ruíz family. I had arranged an interview with Rodrigo, but when I arrived to their humble home, all of the male heads of family were there, including his nephew and his two eldest sons, both of whom are teachers. Because I had already heard a little bit about the divisions between the two families when I arrived in the community, I began the questioning there. The mood was quite indignant, very defensive, and immensely uncomfortable as the oldest member of the younger generation began to share his thoughts:

> They say that there is no one else can get projects like them. No one. Only they can do it. They say they're the smartest. Only they can. There is on one else. That is their pride. In the end when they changed their ways. When they began to take money from the community box. That's where the people separated, and they grabbed their roads, one for one side, the other for the other. The Ruíz family, we met and talked about what we were going to do—all 120 of us—to stop them from dominating.

But it was not simply their pride about their ability to bring development projects to the community that angered the Ruíz, but their general arrogance. Rodrigo's second oldest son, Eriberto, visibly upset as he spoke, continued:

> Eriberto: And bragging too! Bragging that they have capacidad to do things! That's how the people realized, with they [the Morales] getting drunk and saying that they know so much, that they are one way and that we're different.
>
> NC: they say bad things about you?
>
> Eriberto: Insults. More than anything they talked about a family. Here there are three families. They talked about how more than anyone else the Ruíz can't, that they lack capacidad. Because [the Ruíz] lack money and go to the finca or go with a patron to work. That we don't do our own work. They seriously criticize our family. With us the main leader of our family is my father [Rodrigo Ruíz]. He organized the family. He struggled […] for them to study. It was to answer them, so that they wouldn't go around criticizing. And the Lopez are also proud. They still are. When the [time of] politics comes every 4 years, because we have never been together helping a candidate with their families.

NC: But you were divided before, right, regarding the death of Juan Lopez?

Eriberto: Yes. But afterwards we were united to launch Pedro Ramírez. Then the people were united again. It was after that that they started to say things about them being the only ones who knew anything. This year is the ninth year of division. In 1996 there was division. They get so proud! Even their own family was divided. There have now passed two political periods that they do not go with them. We are here, united. We have three periods of working together. We weren't able to win that day. Then we went with another candidate. The first candidacy of Mariano Díaz, but he didn't win. Chepe won. And us? They have this saying that they're 'political technicians' and when we don't win, they criticize us. And we, well, afterwards, we're never going with them. In the next election we helped Mariano Díaz. And Don Rodrigo's friends were in the *muni*. Then they shut up. That's when we got rid of the 'zero.' We divided before the first candidacy of Chepe Antulio. When they have their electoral campaign, only they want to participate. Only they get to be part of the *corporacion municipal*. There's nothing for us. Only them. But not only they can do it.

Most evident here is the sense of wounded pride felt collectively by members of the Ruíz family. It is clear that vindicating the family name played a determinative role in their decision to support the FRG's candidate, Mariano Díaz. What is surprising is how this frame of reference completely overwhelms any other political or ideological considerations. It is as if the party itself—what it stands for at the national level—is irrelevant. They only important thing is the parties willingness to give them space, to take *them* into account. It is significant that the last line, 'not only they can do it,' is the same phrase Mayans use to criticize attempts by Sampedranos Ladinos have justified opposition to Mayan attempts to gain political power.

Even, Diego, who admits to being afraid to participate in the developmetn committe because of lack of experience, includes these forms of disrespect in his explanation of why the Ruíz did not want to participate as much in committe meetings. Diego explains:

Why are there only Bravo in the committees? They only want other Bravo to speak. They don't want to listen to the word of another. But all of us have to

> listen to others words. If you don't like it, you still have to give space to speak. They don't let us talk in reuniones. Only they think that they know what to do.

In his perspective, the Bravo are arrogant in meetings. They discount other people's opinions. This suggests that the reason behind this fear, or whatever other elements in the "lack of desire" to participate, might have been was motivated by the aggressive manner of the Bravo during the meetings. It is hard to know the extent to which such feelings of inadequacy influence individual desires to participate in community leadership positions. The fact that his grandfather and other male family members echoed these sentiments almost verbatim suggests their salience.

FRG: THE PARTY OF THE LESS CAPACITADOS?

Over the years, Rodrigo worked for various opposition parties, mostly progressive ones. They gave him the leadership position he desired, but he never won elections. Having lost a great deal of face, his reputation as a village leader in serious jeopardy, Rodrigo Ruíz decided enough was enough. Convinced that they could never win, and sick of being passed over, Rodrigo gave up on progressive parties, and finally joining the FRG in 1998. Chepe Antulio won that election though; and the ridicule from the Morales-aligned Bravo and Lopez intensified. When Rodrigo finally backed a winning party, one month before I arrived, he was ecstatic. One day, I met Rodrigo while walking home, and he pulled me into a cantina operated by a family from behind their house, which was on the side of the road leading into the village. Unfortunately, they were out of the warm beer they usually served, and so we bought *aguardiente* (liquor) and a soda. The wife of the owner gave us some sliced lime. As my throat burned with the stiff, warm and sweet mixture, Rodrigo began to speak somewhat reflectively:

Rodrigo: You have a lot of experience. A lot of studies. You're a gringo licenciado. You have more experience than me. I am illiterate. I never studied. But now, where am I? On top!

He pulled out his FRG party affiliate card, which named his job in the party.

The gringos say that Guatemalans are only good for having children. I only have one daughter, the rest are boys.

One time, José Antulio in a reunion in front of everyone, heard that I had had another boy. He said, "good" now I will have another mozo. But now you see, I have two children who are teachers, and another one who is going to be a teacher. All of them went out. They're not farmers.

NC: But being a farmer is honorable work, right?

Rodrigo: Yes, it is. But now I am working for development.

What stands out here is that community development is not necessarily an end unto itself; it is that the activity allowed him to be a leader that was so important to him. It is apparent that Rodrigo sees his recent electoral victory as *primarily* a vindication of his lost status as a community leader. It is a salve for his wounded pride.

Rodrigo's ability to be a leader has been restored by the fact that, ever since the Peace Accords, projects are much easier to get. The ability to *gestionar* has become more democratic. It is less necessary for committee members to have a high level of capacidad now than it was in the early 1980s. Many institutinos offer them. A smoother system has developed over the years. Many of the bureaucratic details have been eliminated. When I sat in on meetings between DECOPAZ, where Mateo had worked, and the representatives from the village organizations, there was little expected in the way of opar Being a member of a committe is still hard work. Villagers still have to dedicate time and make trips to different towns for the purposes of finding material and meeting with contractors to discuss and plan projects. But in the current climate, where projects are most often awarded based on political affiliation, the process of "knocking on

doors" which is how the members of the Bravo family describe their work as committe heads. In Los Altenses, this allowed Rodrigo and some of his political allies from the FRG, many of who also illiterate and inexperienced, to find funding for several major projects, including a massive school improvement project. Here, it did not hurt his chances that Mariano Díaz, the FRG party head in San Pedro, was on the board of DECOPAZ, the institution that approved the project, just after the FRG took over program administration from the United Nations.

MARIO MARTÍNEZ

Another man who, for similar reasons having to do with personal status, abandoned the fold of the Bravo family and the political alliance with José Antulio Morales and found what he was looking for in the FRG was Mario Martínez. Mario is young, in his early 30s at the time of this research. He was married and has three young children. When he was 18, he left the village and joined the army, where he fought against guerrilla in Ixcan. Mario seems to have no ideological preference for the military, however. His ideological leanings appeared leftist-inflected, in line with the commonsense antipathy to the state I describe in chapter 3. In one of our interviews, he registered deep dissatisfaction with most of what the army did during the war, especially during the massacres. He is unique form his fellow villagers in that is knowledge of the specifics of the guerrilla movement is based on his experiences in the army, in particular direct fighting with the guerrilla in the Ixcan in the late 1980s, an experience that scared him to bits. For him, being in the army was simply a job, and not a necessarily a controversial one. None of the villagers who were his political rivals ever brought up his having participated in the military as one of the reasons that they diverged from his politics. Mario was an active leader in the FRG's recent political campaign, in charge of

recruiting villagers to vote, organizing rallies, and other duties. He is also a close associate of Mariano Díaz, the FRG *alcalde.*

Mario was deeply invested in being considered a community leader. When I first met Mateo, he was working as a village representative to a state development institution that provided infrastructural projects. When I decided to live in Los Altenses, I did not remember that Mario was from there. Several others had advised me to speak with Arturo Bravo, who they said was the community leader. As I was walking back into San Pedro the night I presented my research proposal to the village meeting in Los Altenses, I ran into Mario. As he gripped my hand, not letting go, I could tell he had been drinking. When he began to speak, I realized he was angry. He chastised me for not talking to him before about coming to do my research in his village. *"Why did you talk to Arturo, and not me?"* He told me he was a leader, and he wanted me to *"take him into account."* And that *"Arturo never takes me into account."* I was shocked—I had forgotten that Mario was from Los Altenses and my friend had never mentioned his name. Apologizing profusely, I assured him that I had every intention of taking him into account in my research. We arranged an interview for the next week.

We discussed the issue of village leadership at length when I met him for an extended interview with him in his home, decorated inside and out with a huge plastic blue and white FRG banners, with their ubiquitous victory fingers logo. Mario's wife, Carolina, When I asked him why he participated in politics, he wove together discussions of development, individual respect, personal reward and memories of being denied that respect by José Antulio Morales:

> NC: Why do you participate in politics?
>
> MM: My goal, is the following: To participate in a political party…we think the first is that, we need development. One, because we well know how we have spoken since the beginning. We can show ourselves demonstrarnos before the

> pueblo how we decide things with our work. What is our plan for work? The other. A person gets involved in politics because you have voice to speak with the people. If the people know you, they give us their trust. If they don't know us—don't know our character—but now our respect, our saludo (greeting) or how we speak, if we obey so and so [a person], if we listen to the petitions of such and such, that is where the people come close to a person. A person has to study in between them all [candidates] to see if it is right for them to get involved. Because it doesn't help at all if we're going to get involved and the people don't want us! It's in vain, the time that one loses.
>
> That's what happened to me with Don Antulio. I didn't have much knowledge before. I only got involved to help out so that he [Antulio] would arrive [win the election]. Thank God he did. But he didn't take my person into account. Sure, [now] I'm not in the planilla (list of candidates for the FRG), but thank God I'm one of the councilors. I'm earning my little salary. It's not much, but it's something, it's something. That is my decision when I got involved. Because if you don't enter into to any compromise and you don't remember someone, well, that was my thinking when I entered. That was how it was.
>
> NC: It pained you that he didn't take you into account?
>
> MM: For a part, yes. But when José Antulio Morales was starting out in politics I didn't think much. I wasn't too angered [then] because as I was telling you I lacked understanding, I lacked ideas, for my age. When you get to older, you think for yourself.

It is interesting the intensity and detail with which he focuses on the interpersonal recognition of leaderships status. Whether or not someone says 'buenas dias' to him on the street as he passes by. To gain this respect, he had to establish himself as someone who could increase the well-being of the fellow villagers, in a demonstrative way. He had to prove it. This is what public office will allow him to do. These feelings of exclusion he mentions seem to be recent. When he was young, he felt them less, because there was no reason to take him seriously. But as he got older and started to have more "ideas" he aspired to be a leader. It was then that being left out began to sting more acutely.

There was another interesting moment I witnessed that exemplified male competition for leadership roles and development. There is a church that is being built, double size, right up the road. Arturo Bravo is the head of the church building committee. He spoke first about fundraising; and there was a raffle to raise money for transportation and cement costs. Later, Arturo spoke at length, about 20 minutes, regarding the building process. Although many of the details were lost on me, it was a very repetitive speech that provided numerous details about the steps that he had taken in finding funds, talking to different contractors, making deals with them, and outlining future steps he would take to *"Knock on all the doors he could"* to look for more money. *"There is always the need for economic resources,"* he explained. He was asking a contribution of Q2 from every person, young men, women and older. He was interrupted by Juan Jiménez, who said that they should ask instead for Q5, because Q2 was not enough. It took him five minutes of elaborate talking to make this point, in his serious, intelligent, almost condescending tone. Arturo thanked him, and proceeded, seemingly taking his advice. In a pause, Mario spoke, saying that people who have more should give more: *"Instead of asking for Q2, it's better to ask for Q5 and above, because some of us are going to be able to contribute more. It's better that everyone gives what they can."* Arturo thanked him, agreed with him, and spoke for another ten minutes. It was clear to me that this was a competitive performance of intelligence, authority and leadership. In the church environment, all can be seen as advancing the well-being of the community. Each alpha male wanted to give their contribution. It indicated what I had perceived previously about competition between Arturo and Juan, and between Mario and both of them.

I saw a great deal of evidence to suggest that this process was not limited to Los Altenses. José Antulio worked with select leaders in each of the 50 villages of San

Pedro. Uneven distribution of capaciadad and leadership manifested in different ways in a number of villages. My investigations revealed that these individuals were part of José Antulio's generation, middle-aged men, experienced hands in brining development to their villages, and education oriented in their outlook. This was a mix of Catholics and Protestants. If anything, there were more Catholics than Protestants, at least in the previous generation. Futhermore, residents from many villages reported disdainful treatment by José Antulio Morales. One of the first things I heard about Chepe Antulio's time as mayor, and something that was repeated numerous times, was that he treated his Mayan constituency with little respect, as if he were a Ladino. He would not attend people when they arrived, despite the long way they might have walked to gain his audience, and tell them to come back tomorrow. Indeed, Chepe stood me up several times before I was able to get him to sit for an interview. Perhaps I shouldn't read anything into this—I was stood up frequently, by dozens of people. But most of those were farmers, who don't keep a daily planner for appointments, like Chepe, who, despite the fact that he was no longer in politics, had many business meetings in San Pedro and in Huehuetenango throughout the day. He was blowing me off intentionally, another reminder of the 'public nuisance' aspect of ethnographic researcher. Of course, part of this might have been concern about the purpose of my investigation. I do remember him pulling aside another informant of mine, and a neighbor and long time close political associate of his who works for the *municipio*, after I left his office one day after making an early appointment. Looking back over my shoulder, I saw that they were talking closely, and Chepe was pointing directly at me. In any case, several people, even some of his family members and close friends, told me that he was *"muy creida"* (very arrogant). A few told me that Chepe had become more arrogant the longer he was in office, apace with his equally fabled accumulation of wealth, power, and weight.

MARIANO DÍAZ

Mariano Díaz, the FRG alcalde of San Pedro, seemed to come out of nowhere to dominate the politics in San Pedro. Mariano is in his early 40s. Several years after his return, Díaz joined the Igesia *Shamma*—an evangelical Pentecostal church—around the same time that he joined the FRG. After losing the 2000 election to José Antulio, Mariano, acting as the leader of the FRG party locally, was appointed to the board of directors of DECOPAZ. DECOPAZ was a World Bank funded organization in charge of implementing infrastructural projects and whose operation had been turned over to the state after the first round of projects was completed. The second round of projects is widely known to have been politicized by the FRG, in control of the presidency and the congress after the 2000 elections. Mariano is an enthusiastic and exciting public speaker. Most of his political speeches include a great deal of self-aggrandizement. He goes on at length about his proficiency in attaining development projects and his closeness to God. He addresses large audiences in much the same tone as an evangelical preacher addresses a congregation. Mariano fills his speeches with jokes and humorous stories.

Mariano is reviled by the Ladinos, for whom he is a disgrace to the *municipio*. Several prominent Ladinos expressed embarrasment that he was the mayor of the city, and longed for José Antulio, whose candidacy they had vehemently opposed at the time. Likewise, the capacitado and professional class Mayans dislike Mariano a great deal, as well as resent his political ascendance. Vicious rumors about Mariano, and open contempt for his authority are rampant. Although he says that he is a teacher, dozens of people swore to me that he never finished high school, he never taught classes, and that he purchased his diploma to claim the credential. Mariano is from San Pedro, but was gone for several years during which he lived and worked for several years in Cancún,

Mexico. Another rumors about Mariano was that he left for Mexico because he was implicated in the robbery and murder of a local man who had just sold his land and was traveling with cash. Immediately after Díaz' term began, complaints began to arise about his joking mentality. At the several town functions I attended, almost no one in the primarily Ladino audience would clap after he finished speaking. Jokes about his strange personal conduct and manner of being are commonplace. He is frequently referred to as "Mariano Chiflado"—a word that means a mixture of crazy, funny and annoying—and also Mariano *Payaso* (Mariano the clown). And more vulgar words are used, including one prominently scrawled with red marker on the wall of the blue and white tiled staircase at his front door.

Mariano stands out from ordinary townspeople, indigenous and Ladino. His facial hair is cut in goatee including what in Austin, TX we would call a 'soul patch'. He cuts a sharp image in new expensive clothes, often sporting a tie, which is rare in the area. His new shoes always have the gleam of a fresh shine. His large silver wristwatch is visible from several yards away. Since he became mayor, he drives around town in a new red Toyota truck—the signature commodity of the superado. These signs of wealth and power are similar to those displayed by José Antulio, and will be discussed more in the next chapter on project centered development.

Despite the fact that he seems too unexperienced to be mayor, the FRG party sought Mariano Díaz out. Why did the FRG select him their candidate? This is impossible to answer without interviewing the people who made the decision, assuming, of course, that they reveal their motivations. In any case, this was something I was unable to do. I was worried about what might happen to me if I went poking around in the party headquarters in Huehuetenango. Nevertheless, several facts stood out. Mariano had wanted political power in the municipio for several years, but was not included in

José Antulio's team, which was mainly composed of professionals and highly capacitated leaders. When Mariano joined the FRG, he still lost his first mayoral race to José Antulio. Most locals who are not members of the FRG attribute his desire to be alcalde to personal interest. And indeed his personal wealth has grown immensly since entering office, far beyond, it would seem, his Q7,000 monthly salary. Like most candidates, they say, Mariano wanted the money that came from corruption. Dozens of people described him as an opportunistic, lying son of a bitch—a career criminal with a taste for power.

My assessment after having seen him operate for his first year of power, and into his second and third, was that the decision by party leaders to select him was based in the fact that he has the perfect combination of characterstics. Mariano is Mayan, so he can speak to the masses and identify with their needs, yet posesses no consciousness of the history of Mayan political opposition to the state (as made clear in chapter 2); he is ambitious, but mostly for personal gain, and definitely eager to taste for himself the fruits of corruption; he is too inexperienced to come up with his own political strategies without being so unintelligent as to not be able to be directed by party leaders; and, last but not least, he is charismatic and energetic enough to hold the attention of a wide audience of people. These are the same traits possessed, to different degrees, by the people who became village level leaders for the FRG.

THE *CAPACITADOS* SPEAK BACK

When I finally did interview Arturo Bravo about familial divisions in the villages, I had already been apprised of the criticisms around notions of *capacidad*. I asked him if he felt that the Bravo family had excluded the Ruíz, and that that was why they chose a different political path. Not surprisingly, he disagreed completely, claiming that the Ruíz

excluded themselves: "*The Ruíz family were always thinking of gaining something, like personally. It was not an idea of ours. We wanted to make something for all the communities. For that reason they separated to look for another party."* In this narrative, everyone was united due to the Bravo family's efforts to look for development projects and support José Antulio. Later, I was able to ask the same question, to José Antulio about the exclusion of the "less *capacitados*" in his political movement. Antulio also disagreed with the criticism, which he seemed to have heard before:

> NC: I have an idea that I want to hear what your opinion about. I think that there were some groups of people who were excluded in the aldeas. In Los Altenses, it was the Ruíz. They were not given spaces for leadership in committes because they were less capacitado. Now, despite the fact tht they used to identify with the guerrilla movement, they support Ríos Montt. My idea is that they see the FRG as a way to recuperate their respect and leadership in the village.
>
> Antulio: I don't think so. We invited them to join the group. It was they who didn't want to come to reuniones. They also didn't want cargos in the Church. They didn't want to work, but they get made when something comes and they aren't receiving it. But it's true. It is the least capacitated people in all of the villages that are helping the FRG.

Chepe steadfastly held his ground, refusing any responsibility. He blamed their lack of desire to work. He says that they just had personal interests at heart. Perhaps he is correct; but even he has no explanation for what he observed as a large amount of people with low levels of capacidad supporting the FRG. Perhaps what the Bravo family members said about not exlcuding Ruíz from participating is true in a way. It could be that their monopoly on the ability to speak the truth, underwritten by their previous training, led them to exclude the Ruíz, on "objective grounds." The Bravo coud easily have constructed the Ruíz' apprehension about participating in committees as evidence of their inferiority, on the 'objective' scale of modern narratives of progress. The Ruíz's unwillingness, or inability, to assimilate at the same rate was seen in purely negative

terms, as lack; they became seen as lagging behind. Unable or unwilling to articulate an alternative vision to *capacidad*, the Ruíz criticized the way that the Bravo treated them.

CONCLUSION

In Los Altenses, it appears that the hierarchical thinking present in notions of *capacidad* has altered social relations between Mayans. People who were associated most with norms of capacidad became arrogant, exclusive and abusive with their neighbors who were not as developed. At their worst, they bullied and silenced them. Making fun of their neighbors' backwardness completes their self-identification as modern. For years, Mayans suffered these same forms of discrimination from Ladinos. Now, in a sad turn of events, at the same time that public humiliation of indigenous people is becoming less acceptable, more the exception than the rule, indigenous people began to discriminate against one another. It is possible that these divisions provide a support for Ladino racism towards indigenous. I have heard several Ladinos justify their own discrimination against indigenous people on the basis of the fact that "Indians discriminate against themselves." There is no question that discourses of capacidad have created a heated division between families and individuals. It has hurt their community bond and their ability to collectively participate in politics.

Some community members who are on the receiving end of these new norms have voiced strong opposition to this discrimination. They felt disrespected and emasculated. Members of the Ruíz family articulate a criticism of *capacidad*. On the one hand, they accept that it is important to learn things, to train, and to gain new experiences. The target of their critique is the public forms of humiliation and insults attached to the categir they have only reached the point of criticizing the excesses associated with these forms of reason. This reworking of the concept calls attention to the

existence of a form of human value that exists regardless of what kind of capacidad that people have. This is a level on which all the people in the village are equal. They internalized the terms of this discourse, and attempted to assimlate themselves to it. Their criticism is a call to treat those who have not yet mastered the norm with dignity. It is not at all clear to me whether it is possible to have a norm that ranks people on a scale of ascending value and still be able to treat as equal people on different locations along that scale.

These divisions and forms of exclusion do seem to have provided a foothold to the FRG, whose presence becomes productive in the context of these antagonisms. The FRG does not emphasize capacidad. In fact, they seem to look for people who have less capacidad to join their party. I would not be surprised if there is an explicit strategy in the FRG to recruit people who fit the characteristics that I have described in this chapter. Without leaders who are respected by the community at large, the FRG would not be able to operate in the villages: they would have no credibility. By joining the FRG, these villagers can play the role of leader in their villages, just as well as any other villager, and they can also enjoy the fruits of corruption. Respect and economic advantage are two powerful motivating forces. In addition to the factors discussed in chapters 2, 3, and 5, this is one of the paths that lead some villagers, in this case, would be leaders, to unite with the FRG. This has nothing to do with political ideology.

I titled this chapter "revolt against capacidad" to evoke the famous ethnography of Aguacatan written by Brintnall and quoted in this chapter. He describes the challenge to village hierarches in the 1960s as a "Revolt Against the Dead", the Dead being the cult of ancestor worship at the basis of community hierarchy. I do not know the extent to which a "revolt against capacidad" plays into FRG victories in other Mayan villages or other towns in the region. In some towns, like Colotenango, political divisions are much more

deeply rooted in the war itself, positioning some with the military and others with the guerrilla. This was a subtle process that I detected because of the time I spent living in one village and investing the roots of their divisions. It was a complicated tangle to work through. At the end, it seemed obvious to me that I had captured something that was happening there, but I did not have enough time to document these processes elsewhere. Besides Antulio's observation that it was the less capacitated people in general that joined the FRG, the corroborating evidence is somewhat thin. There are many curious similarities between the party members of the FRG that does seem to suggest that the FRG purposefully selects a type of leaders. Furthermore, there is a distinct advantage, especially for a political party with such strong ties to the anti-reformist military as the FRG, in having a weak *alcalde*. A weak *alcalde* allows the party itself a freer reign in intervening in community relationships. Party technicians, who are in constant direct contact with indigenous *alcaldes*, call the shots on campaign and government strategy, informing some very basic decisions. As the next chapter illustrates, it seems very risky to place these types of authority in the hands of people for whom community well being is not of direct importance.

NOTES

[1] In 2004 a change in this process was already underway due to the new laws on decentralization. Decentralization consolidates all community development committees into one committee: the *Consejo Municipal del Desarrollo* (COMUDE), with the representative to be selected by vote from among the villagers, and changing, like all other cargoes, annually, unless for some reason a particular individual is deemed exceptionally capable in their task, or shows great enthusiasm, or if a task cannot be carried out adequately by any other willing villagers. But in 2004, although the COMUDE representative was already in place, community members had still not completely dissolved pre-existing committees.

Chapter Nine: Project-centered Development and Community Autonomy

When I arrived at the meeting of the development council, three days after my first meeting with the new *alcalde* from the ultra-right FRG, I sat down in the back row, among the various community representatives (all of whom were male). This was the *alcalde's* first meeting with the recently established *Consejo Municipal del Desarrollo* (Community Development Council, COCODE). The *alcalde*, who had just entered the salon with his entourage, noticed me, smiled broadly, and gestured that I should come up and sit with him and his advisors on the makeshift stage. To my surprise, after brief introductory comments, I was handed the microphone and told to introduce myself and describe my work to the crowd. Startled, vastly under-prepared, and stuttering, I described as briefly and as vaguely as possible, the aim of my research as "to ensure that the government development programs respond to the needs of the people." This was met with polite applause. The *alcalde* spoke next. I was immediately struck by his tone: He spoke in the same cadence and pitch as the evangelical preacher. He spoke loudly into the microphone, hanging on syllables, breathing in quickly in a way that make an emphatic sucking sound in the microphone, and filling his speech with poetic repetitions. He switched frequently between Mam and Spanish. He spoke Mam very quickly, with the same fervor. Without a doubt, the new *alcalde* was one hell of a public speaker. His talk stuck to several central, memorable key points, all of which revolved around this one:

> San Pedro ne-ces-ita desarrollo. Si o No? (audience) Si!Desarrollo es necesario. No pelea con nadie. Sin ello, nadie puede hacer nada. Nosostros los Sampedranos, tenemos que mejorar. Tenemos que ser personas que….No

> podemos ser personas que piensan solo en nosotros mismos. Tenemos que ser personas que piensan en las com-u-ni-da-des San Pedro necesita un cambio, pero solo nosotros lo podemos cambiar. Uds. son los lideres. Uds. van a decidir. Uds. saben que son las necesidades en tus com-u-ni-dad-es! El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido!
>
> San Pedro needs a change. Yes or No? (audience) Yes! Development is necessary. It does not fight with anyone. Without it, no-one can do anything. We San Pedranos have to get better. We have to be people who.We can't be people who think only about ourselves. We have to be people who think about the com-un-i-ty. San Pedro needs a change but only we can change it. You are going to decide. You know what are the necessities are in your com-u-ni-ties! The pueblo, united, will never be divided!

He peppered this talk with lots of jokes, including one in which he compared a development project to an attractive young woman in a mini-skirt. This irreverent impersonation, and other humorous asides seemed to put him as well as his audience at ease. Upon hearing this speech, similar to ones I would hear many more times while in San Pedro, I realized I had been temporarily co-opted into a local drama—the *alcalde's* self-presentation as a charismatic and powerfully connected individual, completely dedicated and fully able to bring development to the communities, evidenced now by his relationship to an expert, a *gringo* no less, who was going to study development.

I must admit I felt a bit dirty. Spending time with the members of the *Asociación* CEIBA as they had their last meeting in November, days before the national elections of 2003 I heard many criticisms of FRG 'vote buying' tactics. These were featured in a *dinamica* (skit) in which a one of the men from the NGO, a Mayan ex-guerrilla trainer, pretended to fly down to a community in a helicopter and offer villagers small, valuable items, like machetes, ladles and various pots and pans. Villagers, played by other CEIBA staff, humbly thanked the FRG party for their wonderful gifts, and promised to vote for them in the next week's elections. This elicited a great deal of laughter from the audience of returned refugees, ex-guerrilla combatants, and URNG party members.

Afterwards I spoke to one of my closer friends in the NGO, Carlos, a Mayan health promoter who had lived for15 years in exile in Chiapas and now was in a community of *retornados* in a *municipio* in Huehuetenango. I asked if he thought that this dramatization was fair, making fun of people who vote for the Right. "Are they really stupid?" I asked. He said, *"You're right. It's true. They could probably just as easily play making fun of us, a bunch of guerrillas, the same way we are making fun of them."*

Contributing to bad populism was the least of my concerns. After I had been in San Pedro for a couple of weeks, Guadalupe, a key informant who I had met initially through CEIBA, came to visit me in a hotel room I had converted into a kitchen. To fight off the cold, and take advantage of some of the fresh herbs readily available in the weekly market, I made a pot of ginger, mint and chamomile tea with plenty of sugar. While we drank our tea, we talked about the political situation in the villages. Holding her cup in both hands for warmth as the cold night air drifted in the open window, Guadalupe said: *The problem now is that we are all divided."* She said in a serious and concerned voice. *"There are fifteen parties and we are divided into all of them. It's everyone for themselves. This is the situation we have now. We are divided by parties."*

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Over the past twenty years there has been a sea change in politics in Guatemala's rural highlands. Rural Mayans, once completely excluded from municipal politics—with a brief exception in some areas during the democratic period of 1944-1954—now dominate the political scene in the rural highlands. Regardless of party affiliation, Mayans now hold the top positions in most municipal governments. Most elections pit indigenous candidates against other indigenous candidates. At the same time, *desarrollo* (development) is the name that rural Mayans give to their political demands. Candidates for the presidency, or for high level legislative positions, use a populist, pro-Mayan

rhetoric when campaigning in the region. Development, specifically infrastructural and individudal assistance "projects", has replaced violence, military occupation, and the Civil Patrol system as the primary mechanism through which rural Mayans encounter the state. Examining this encounter is essential to understanding the meaning of democracy in post-revolutionary Guatemala.

In official discourses, like the one of the FRG *alcalde*, development is the sanctioned and idealized route to full Mayan inclusion in national political and economic life. This narrative promises that infrastructure and individual assistance programs will benefit impoverished and war-torn communities by bringing them the fruits of modernity. During the war, this military made this explicit commitment to obedient communities—those who stayed away from the guerrilla, and, when they became legal, from social movements.[1] Today conservative and neo-authoritarian political parties use infrastructure and individual assistance programs as proof of the state's commitment to the role of benevolent provider of basic resources for Mayans communities. In this narrative, the benevolent state is the foremost provider of development. Mayan candidates bend over backwards to demonstrate their commitment to provide development to poor Mayan communities.

This chapter focuses on development politics in San Pedro. Previous studies have been able to examine state development policy doing from the outside. It has been very difficult to do intensive research, much less in-depth ethnography, on Mayan responses to these development politics, and few have examined the long-term implications of village development on Mayan communities (Stepputat 2001).[2] It is a testimony to the changes in rural Guatemalan political life that such a study could be undertaken.

I view development as a crucial site where rural Mayans imagine the state and their own political agency and formulate political demands. It is also a mechanism

through which they imagine and reproduce community relationships with other villagers. I attempt to read Mayan political understandings through the way that they relate to development through their participation in these daily practices.

This chapter presents ethnographic data to address the following deeply related questions, appropriate for programs that were specifically intended to control behavior through resources. How do Mayans make sense of and respond to these programs, and specifically how these forms of knowledge and practice have filtered into local discourses and practices of politics, development and community? How are these meanings shaped by the power relationships that subtend Mayan claims to community development? What are the power relationships being articulated or rearticulated through development projects? How do the power relations depend upon what these projects mean to the people, in this case Mayan villagers who desire them? What spaces for political thought and action have opened as a result of the ascendance of state delivery of projects in rural Mayan communities? What spaces have been closed, or blocked? To what extent and under which existing development practices reproduce certain understandings of the political as normal, inevitable, or, in somehow desirable, while others become impossible unlikely or feared?

To answer these questions, this chapter brings to the surface of the discourses, narratives, and understandings embedded in the discourses and practices of infrastructural and individual assistance development. Speeches like the one at the beginning of this chapter, exemplify the official discourse on community development. It is ubiquitous and saturates public discussions, but it hardly exhausts local understandings, many of which are built into the practice of development, and go often unquestioned and unspoken. While unspoken, without these shared understandings it would be impossible for development to function the way that it does in rural Mayan villages.

FROM ABANDONMENT TO REPRESSION TO INCLUSION THROUGH PROJECTS

A short 40 years ago, as Mayans old enough to remember recount, the vast majority of rural Mayan villages were, as they had been for centuries, completely abandoned by the state. Villages had no schools, and most residents were non-literate. Women carried water daily to their houses from small, hand excavated *pozos* (wells) that would dry up in the winter months. They were also far from individual homes and required many trips to gather water for daily needs. Dirt paths, cut by foot and machete, not wide enough for a car to pass, connected villages to one another and to the town center. Small, wooden bridges, or rocks, helped Mayans traverse the streams that ran out of the mountains on their trips into the *casco urbano*. At night, houses were lit by candles, or by oil lamps. As village populations grew in the 1960s, these conditions became increasingly unsustainable.

Between the late 1950s and the mid 1960s, communities, mostly with the assistance of the Catholic Church, began to form development committes, *comites de pro-mejoramiento*. The most common reason for the formation of these committes was to construct a school. The first schools were *ranchitos*, small houses enclosed by sticks and with thatch rooves. I will use the story of one village in San Pedro, Los Altenses, as an example. Their case is typical. As population rose, and water supplies dwindled, residents of los Altenses began to request potable water projects from the municipal government, tubes that ran, sometimes miles, from a known clean water source and different family *chorros* (spigots). They also organized on their own to cut a road wide enough for a car to pass.

The first project for potable water began in 1983. Members of the original committe for potable water in Los Altenses, which had organized nearly a decade

previously, recalls how representatives from UNIPAR, came to look for the communtiy committe, which had been organized since the early to mid 1970s. UNIPAR representatives offered the PVC piping and material, and the community members divided the expenses between themselves. They also had to go and get these items. He also recalls how angry the town Ladinos became over the initiative, which would provide potable water to three communities. One commented *"they wanted all of the water for themselves."* Despite this new level of organization, the populist rhetoric of the dictator General Lucas Garcia, and some campaign promises from MLN candidates, all infrastructure projects in San Pedro were directed towards the primarily Ladino *casco urbano*.

Many villages received projects under Ríos Montt's regime. Ríos Montt had made this very clear with his *"frijoles o fusiles"* campaign in that same year. Those who abandoned the guerrilla were offered amnesty and development in "model communities" and those who refused the offer would be hunted down and killed. Several schools were constructed in the period directly after the violence, in 1983, in villages that had expressed enthusiastic support for the formation of the civil patrols and went about their task with apparent earnest. Although these were small buildings, these were testimonies to the state's approval and dedication to support allied-communities. There was an explicit understanding that communities were being rewarded for not participating in the guerrilla movement, and not being asked to prefer any particular political party. At the same time, some communities with a stronger investment in the guerrilla movement refused to approve army led development projects in their village, in many cases because they did not want military presence in community affairs.[3] Development at that time had dual meanings, either threat or reward, depending on one's perspective.

Early committee members, and current, ones, attest that navigating the state bureaucracy was an sizeable obstacle. In the early 1980s, still few elder community members could read and write and few had traveled out of their region, especially not to Quetzaltenango. The first potable water project, once approved, was at first rejected because the paperwork was signed by *huella* (fingerprint), instead of with the signatures of the committee members. A new committee, one that could sign, was formed for this reason. As this description makes clear, the number of projects in these years was very few. Any requests were to state institutions and not to the local government, which had no resources on their own for projects of any magnitude.

This situation was drastically altered in 1985 with the advent of the 8% municipal tax. This tax would give alcaldes control over the *gestionamiento* (planning, profiling and negotiating) of development projects as well as their distribution. As a result of the new opportunities for development projects, with some help from the Church, but increasingly by the work of DIGESA—the General Directory of Agricultural Sciences some community members had learned how to *gestionar* (plan and petition) projects with state institutions. This strengthened local development committees, which subsequently multiplied. The old comité pro-mejoramiento remained pre-ememinent, but was now supplemented by different comites focused on particular needs: *pro-molino* (mill); *escuela* (school); *pro-carretera* (road); *luz electrica* (electric light); and others. The most important motivation for Mayan political organizations in the mid 1980s for having an indigenous *alcalde* was to have influence over the flow of new municipal development funds.

In the late 1980s, years after the military defeat of the left, representatives from some military-aligned, oligarchic political parties began to approach local Mayan leaders. They offered development projects and mayoral positions in exchange for political

allegiance and avoidance of leftist politics. The first indigenous candidate for alcalde after the violence was Pedro Ramírez. In 1986, representatives of the PAN party came and spoke to the group, announcing that they would finance their campaign, and provide development projects for the communities. In the very recent past, exclusion and exploitation of Mayan communties was enforced by violence. During the violence, the military served as an accomplice to Ladino desires to crush Mayan struggles for local power. Now, the state would attempt to accomodate indigenous desires to improve their lives and communities, and to resist local Ladino domination and exclusion. But if the new politics of inclusion aceded to Mayan hopes for local equality, it was part of a strategy to further undermined their participation in social movements with national aspirations for reform. Mayan leaders were told that new political spaces and opportunties for rural development was conditioned on their non-participation in social movements. There seemed to be an understanding among the party leaders and the members of rural Mayan organizations that these organizations had been sympathetic to the revolutionary cause, but that that support would end. Mayan leaders, convinced by the violence of the futility of the revolutionary movement, opted to accept the bargain in hopes of reaping the benefits of development while they waited for new political spaces to open. Today, conservative parties share the task of selectively managing a sanctioned form of Mayan politics, while competing for Mayan votes.

When Mayan leaders in San Pedro won the alcaldia for the first time in 1993, the state delivered on their part of the bargain: projects began to flow to rural communities. Their work earned them a second term. After the signing of the Peace Accords, a huge wave of projects targeted rural Mayan communities. This dramatically increased the power of being *alcalde*, who before did not administer so many funds nor wield so much

political power. This also further cemented the promise of development as a viable means of social and political advancement.

A DIRTY GAME: EMBEDDED UNDERSTANDINGS IN STATE-DEVELOPMENT

More than by official narratives of development and community reconstruction, local meanings of development are produced through the daily practices of development: the way that they are actually implemented, distributed, narrated and debated by community members. The first understanding is that development means projects. 'Project' is an umbrella term for any kind of assistance, from potable water, or roads, to a scholarship, a job or medicine—precious commodities most Mayans could not otherwise afford. New programs trained Mayans to think of development in terms of discrete projects. Communities created prioritized lists, which they presented to the mayor and development institutions. These lists expanded over time to include such items as mills, latrines, and stoves. Talk of projects is incessant among villagers. When anyone from the United States goes to a Mayan community, one of the first questions asked is if I have any projects, or if I can help them get them. I always told them I was only a student and that I did not work for any granting institution.[4]

Another characteristic of formal as well as informal discourse about development is that projects come from the "state." Although there are other institutions, and international aid, the state is depicted as the preeminent agent of development. Most projects are narrated as proof of the "state's" or *el gobeirno* commitment to the role of benevolent provider for Mayan communities. Development is presented as a departure from the violent state of the past. In addition, development discourses depict the state as surrounding the communities, looming above them and peering down into the intimate

contexts their lives to see and attend to their needs, achieving a sense of apparent "vertical encompassment" of the town and village (Gupta and Ferguson 2002).

In addition, projects are insufficient for community needs and arrive irregularly. Institutions and politicians respond to community demands, or not, at their leisure. It often takes years for a project to go through institutional channels. The bigger the project the longer it takes. False promises of aid are the norm. The most common excuse given is scarce resources. Furthermore, in project celebrations, populist discourses, and in everyday interactions with politicians and institutions, Mayans are symbolically depicted as dependent on state-provided resources. All of these understandings were illustrated to me one day when I accompanied Mariano Díaz on what is a fairly routine trip to a village whose leaders had requested a personal audience. They wanted to talk to him directly, and were unwilling to accept a councilor of his as a replacement. They wanted to discuss with the alcalde why some of the projects he had promised during his campaign, now, over a year later, had not arrived. They were also frustrated with other problems of necessities in the community going unmet, and in particular there were some health concerns. Mariano was very clear in response to these questions. He first told them that "the municipal budget does is insufficient for everyone. Imagine, there are 56 communities in San Pedro." He told them that they could make a request *"but I can't tell you that right away today but rather than perhaps we can help you in some part. I can't give projects like this, continuously, because other communities are also getting them and it depends on the necessities more urgent in other communities."* There is simply not enough for every community to have every project that they want to have: the budget is too small and Guatemala is poor.

The *alcalde* went on to describe how a landslide had created a need in a community the previous year, forcing him to prioritize it above other projects in other

places. He even said how he was a good guy and had given them warm cups of coffee in the early morning when they came to his house in the town center to ask for his help. At one point, he even criticizes the community leaders, telling them that:

> We can help you depending on your necessities, but we don't want you to be necios (silly/brats) like a child for example, that to fregar (screw around and ruin) you get wet or you give your shoe to a dog so that the dog eats it and then come running to daddy to ask for help. That's no good.

He also reminded them that, "*Projects are not the solution for poverty."* For that, he counseled, everyone has to pray to God, work hard and give a good education for your children. They community was also worried about crime, and children stealers—several cases had been reported in the area. For this, the *alcalde* suggested—although he said ordering them would be illegal—to form again the patrols that had once existed in order to fight the delinquents who lived among them, much like, as one of his councilors emphasized, the guerrilla had twenty some years before.

These more "realistic" admissions, which do a lot to undermine the official discourse, mark the fundamental ambivalence in development discourses. They promise a lot, then tell people that these promises are "just promises," something that the mayor would love to be able to provide, but simply cannot under the circumstances. The alcalde, the strong provider of development, is depicted simultaneously as fundamentally limited by a state that is unwilling to provide more funds. San Pedro is a large town full of poor people, each with their needs and wants. San Pedro Necta is one example of a larger drama, the national fight against poverty. After the meeting, which, like everything else in San Pedro, started late and ended late, we bounced down the hill in the darkness, the slippery steep trail illuminated by my flashlight. By the time we were far enough from the schoolhouse to be out of hearing distance, the *alcalde* let his emotion fly, *"Did we convince them or did we convince them!"* Also elated, one of his counselors, a young,

high-school educated man employed in the planning and directing of projects, responded, *"Yes, because we came with strategies!"*

Of course, any child knows that development projects are provided as quid pro quo for political support. To get projects from a political party, you have to go sign up with the party. Everyone knows this. It is not news. When I lived in San Pedro, the hotel owner Edgar, a Ladino, was the local representative for a prominent party. Mayan villagers would always come to his house, hats in hand, requesting audience with him and signing their names to lists. One day when I ran into Edgar on one of his increasingly frequent trips to the department capital, he told me that his party had a plan of sending projects to five villages. As we sat down to a lunch of roasted chicken, a delicacy only available in the city, he informed me that he was going to start by extending roads to each village, and then give *laminas* (fiberglass roofing). By the time the election rolled around, he could count on their votes. With so many parties competing, it was only necessary to have solid support in several villages. This creates a significant limitation of the compassion horizon for big political parties. They need only concern themselves with one tenth of the villages in a town in order to legitimately claim legal authority. Individuals who support a losing candidate often get passed over for development projects by the winner, who must favor his followers, honoring as many promises as he can if he wants to avoid danger. Stories about many alcaldes who have been lynched for false promises are common in the region.

Edgar further elaborated that his election plan was to work with remote villages, *"because the villagers who live close lie. They promise you their vote, but then at the last minute, they take it back. They take advantage. The people who live in further away villages, where there is more poverty, are more honest."* I wondered what about living farther from the town center would make them more honest. Then I asked him if the

political parties weren't taking advantage of the people and lying to them as well. Edgar looked a bit deflated at first, but then became more serious, looked into my eye. Chuckling, he said that, yes, they were. In admitting this, Edgar draws attention to the other part of development that is taken for granted: promises of development are common, and they are commonly false. The most common complaint about politics is that politicians will promise everything, but in the final moment do not deliver. The current *alcalde* promised twenty laminas to every man and woman who voted for him. This is an expensive gift, as each lamina costs about Q75, three days pay. It was too expensive in fact. Three years after his victory, villagers are still waiting for their *laminas*. With so many political parties making so many promises to villagers, it is not necessary to win a majority of votes to win a municipal election. The FRG won with a little over 2,200 out of nearly five times that many voters. Therefore, party representatives can focus their efforts on three or four villages and perhaps still win a majority. The rest of the villages do not matter.

Although the *alcaldes* get most of the blame when projects do not materialize, it is unclear that false promises are their sole responsibility. When I was invited to observe a group of indigenous politicians (all men) discuss the formation of a political party after José Antulio Morales' death, they began the discussion talking about projects promised to them from the party that they planned to unite with. There were several projects, including a housing project that would benefit over 150 families, (of the candidate's election of course) it seemed to me odd that there would be such a huge promise made. And, down the line, it turned out that the project would be much smaller; around 25 houses were eventually approved. This false promise just as often came from above, not from the candidates themselves.

There are several ways to direct projects. At the largest level, there are megaprojects, such as a new municipal building, a new market, or a road connecting the town to the outside world. One of the first megaprojects undertaken by Mariano Díaz was a containing wall on the road leading to the Interamerican Highway. It made a barrier on the side of the road where there was a steep drop into the Selegua River below. It also stopped erosion, which makes the road incredibly weak during the monsoon season. Sometimes, alcaldes promise development projects to entire communities. Roads are an example. Many projects are offered on an individual basis. The most common example of this is a job, usually on a municipal infrastructural project, paying better than the going rate (Q20-25for a *jornalero* (day laborer), sometimes three times as much. It is also a common strategy for candidates to focus on village subsectors, small geographical subregions within villages, which usually have distinct names. Subsectors tend to be extended family units, but are not exclusively kin based. Like individuals, entire subsectors receive items such as stoves and *pilas* (large cement sinks for washing clothes); but subsectors also have specific needs, like corn mills and potable water projects.

There has been a tendency in recent years to direct development projects specifically towards Mayan women. In the last decade, women's position in Mayan communities has become a topic of special concern for a number of state institutions and NGO's many of which have formulated plans for women. Projects aimed at women are stoves, mills, and home industry (such as chickens for laying eggs). It is now common for women to sit on development committees for the types of projects directed towards women. The new law of COCODES requires that two women and two men sit on the village development councils. In San Pedro, all acting presidents were still men, meaning that the monthly COCODE meeting in the town center was almost all male. The logic

accompanying many of these interventions holds that Mayan culture discriminates against women. Women are abused and marginalized in their communities. Therefore, these women need protection from outside institutions. Although such 'feminist' discourses accompany these projects, there are few state-run programs to support community women's organizations with stong human rights components.

Projects are not usually simply gifts. Most often with large infrastructural projects, community members are expected to provide *mano de obra*. This is their contribution, usually in labor hours. If a community is going to get a school built, for example, community members themselves gather rocks to stretch the cement, and spend long hours digging out the foundation space, mixing cement, laying the cinder blocks, and other tasks. Community members, mostly men, work together, usually on a Saturday, to maintain roads, using machetes to clearing the roadside of weeds and using hoes to fill in potholes with dirt. Women participate by preparing food, although they rarely engage in the work itself. *Mano de obra* was another place where a sense of community is produced, where villagers work together for a common goal. When I asked why some men did not participate, I was told, *"we don't all think alike. Some of us want to work for the community, others don't."*

Because of rampant politicization of development, politics is a male competition between to see who can provide more development projects. Most men start in their villages, working with committees, learning how to navigate institutions, developing relationships with politicians. After they have built up a reputation as a person with powerful connections in the state and in development institutions, some develop political aspirations. Parties also pick people who they think would be viable carriers of their banner. Certain leaders become legendary. A family member of José Antulio Morales was intent on impressing me with Antulio's power, even though Chepe no longer held

elected office at the time. He told me that, *"Chepe is still powerful because he backed the GANA party in the second round of voting"* In fact, he noted, *"Chepe is discussing a water project with an engineer who has already approved it. He is working on development projects in this village and in ten others."* At Antulio's burial later that year, a huge event attended by at least 1,000 people, one of the speakers said that, *"Every community in San Pedro has a recuerdo (souvenir) from Chepe."*

Mariano Díaz also had to establish himself as a development rainmaker before winning office. He worked on the board of DECOPAZ, in its third cycle of projects. This was the cycle that happened after the institution, formerly run by the UN, was turned over to the state, meaning that it fell into the hands of the FRG, and was completely politicized. In a speech before the COCODE, Mariano, speaking from a stage with a microphone, told the crowded room that he personally had spoken with Licenciado. Oscar Berger, the president, and that Oscar had promised to would lay asphalt on the dangerously switchbacked mountainous road into town. This seemed to be a clear lie, but went uncommented at the meeting. And there was some reason to believe. After all, Mariano Díaz was able to give several major projects, including roads, potable water projects, and schools to several villages. While the law strictly prohibits anyone who sits on the board of a development institution from running a campaign, this conflict of interest, more than anything else, is precisely what makes Mariano Díaz a viable candidate.[5] Attacks on a candidate from political opponents focus on their weakness and inability to bring projects.

The most obvious indication of this male competition is the practice in which all projects, with the exception of small individual projects, are announced with large signs, always painted in the colors of the institution or political party in charge of authorizing the project, and telling the amount of money the project cost and the amount of work that

the community gave in *mano de obra*, and, increasingly, writing the names of the alcalde and his team. These signs are impossible to miss; and they give the feel of a constant state of campaigning. Another sign of this male competition for dominance is by the consumption patterns of indigenous politicians. Winning a town election catapults a person into *'superado'* status, even if they were not there before. While unremarkable by North American standards, each floor of his home is larger and built more sturdily than the average home in the region, many of them, even in the town center, are made of adobe, which is covered by a small layer of concrete (*repellado*). Because it is across the street from a steep heavily treed mountainside, its outline is clearly visible from across the town, especially when entering or leaving on the main road from the town towards the Interamerican Highway. Resolving any doubts one might have about the centrality of gendered spectacle to claims of political power, Mariano's house towers up like a huge erect penis above the rooftops of his neighbors' houses. It was a literal tower, and more than enough space, as many reminded me, for his family of five. No other house in the entire town, Ladino or Mayan, was even half the size. Even the new house being built by José Antulio was only two stories. Of course, the house did double duty as FRG headquarters. It's function as a meeting house was announced by the party logo, the little blue hand with victory-like "V" fingers against a white background.

Town members, both Ladinos and indigenous, expressed a great deal of disgust at this show of personal wealth. They see his house, along with his shiny red truck, as proof that he is dipping into the local till. It disgusts them. Anger and suspicion about the origins of his house and truck turned to anger in both in the local *boletín*—a xeroxed page of very raw, stinging and often very sexist gossip about town members and town politics, published anonymously twice a year comes out once or twice a year. At the same time, Morales was finishing construction on his home in San Pedro, still large, but more

modest than Marianos. Still, Chepe had homes in his home village, as well as a house in the city of Huehuetenango, where he resided before his untimely death in a car accident. In this way, Mayan leaders appropriate the official discourses on progress through projects as a way to aggrandize themselves in the pursuit of wealth and power.

SUNK TO THE BOTTOM IN CORRUPTION

Talk of male competition inevitably slides into another element of common knowledge: that funds for development are loosely controlled. People holding political power, or occupying a leadership role in a committee have access to these loose funds. Development funds are loosely controlled, making corruption a huge temptation for everyone, especially the mayor and his cronies, who deftly bypass new legal regulations. One person told me that part of the reason so many political parities exist is because of the number of men who want to get a crack at money from corruption, in addition to their Q7,000 monthly salary—far beyond the local average, almost six times a teachers' pay. Some corruption is clearly inevitable, even for people who do not take office solely for personal greed. A friend of mine, an indigenous activist who had worked in the alcaldia of the capital city in a different department told me that outside institutions often require bribes, or also routinely give them as a favor to an alcalde or village representative for awarding their company a contract—even if the contract was legitimately won! Members of the national *Controlaría* (accounting office) had the temerity to request that the *municipio* buy them an expensive piece of lakefront property in order to give legal approval for rebuilding the municipal building. Paying for the land required them to use off the books measures. One day, while on a bus out of San Pedro, I happened to sit next to Mariano Díaz's new municipal secretary from San Pedro Necta. He was quite open, and we spoke at length about how corruption worked in the towns. He said that there is

no control of funds. In fact, he told me, the controlador for the entire department of Huehuetenango was shot and killed when I was doing fieldwork in 2004. One can only imagine what for. As if on cue, the secretary opened his wallet to hand me his card, I looked inside and saw dozens of cards emblazoned with the names of construction companies.

Development money is the prize for much smaller forms of corruption. *Alcaldes*, leaders of Community Development Councils, (COMUDES) or who sit on the board of other development institutions commonly make deals with contractors. A friend of mine, I will call him Alejandro, worked as a community representative to the development institution DECOPAZ (Community Development for Peace). DECOPAZ that had provided numerous projects to the town and to his village. DECOPAZ elects representatives for micro-regional units, which comprise several villages in the town. When I was talking to Alejandro about village politics, he began expressing his anger at a neighbor of his who also sits on the board:

> Alejandro: But he is not good in politics either. He likes to get money from the diputados (congressmen) and the construction companies. To get his 'tip'. If one works, the people are going to see it. It is possible but between everyone.
>
> NC: You have the power to take some of the money?
>
> Alejandro: That's what I'm saying, but if it is between everyone, between all of the directors. He's not the only one there, there are 5 people legally authorized. One dialogue between everyone. But he does it alone.
>
> NC: How does he do it?
>
> Alejandro: If there is a project, he likes to look for the contractors himself, alone. But why? So that in the very hour we make the decision to go with that contractor [to do the job]. But that is not right. It's worth more, if he wants to do it that way, that he does it between everyone. A certain contractor can do the job, but between everyone, not just one. Not only one person is hungry. Not only one person is thirsty. And we sign together.

Alejandro is expressing a proper way of being corrupt. It cannot be a single person; the entire group has to be involved for it to be legitimate. Corruption is wrong, in a sense, but it is so common and so built into the development process that it is hardly worth criticizing someone for taking advantage. What is wrong is to go it alone and take all of the benefits for oneself. This is one element of what de Sardaan (1999) writing in the context of postcolonial Africa refers to as a "moral economy of corruption".

Another example of an illegitimate type of corruption involves someone stealing something that people need and would have otherwise receive. After the first year, tempers flared when hundreds of bags of fertilizer from the state fertilizer program turned up in the private storage houses of his friends and political allies. Confronted at a COCODE Mariano appealed to a local *Ministero de Agricultura y Ganado* MAGA representative, saying that he had told him to store the fertilizer in different houses. The startled MAGA representative replied *"Mr. Mayor, please do not involve me in your* sinvergonzadas (*shameless behavior).*" Trapped, Mariano, quoting the Bible, called the angry crowd 'devils' and said that they were chasing him.[6]

More regularly, the alcaldes seemed to ignore attempts to regulate on their power. In 2000, the UNOPS did a study of San Pedro, listing priorities and goals for development. José Antulio ignored this document, preferring, for obvious reasons, to make his own decisions regarding project priorities. Both he and Marino Díaz seemed very capable of evading even the new COCODE system, founded by the law on the Consejos de Desarrollo, part of the new law of decentralization. Of course, the corrupt controlaria helped in this. The Law on Consejos requires that each village elect their own representative committee, a COMUDE (Community council), who will then appoint one member, usually the president (always male in San Pedro), as the village representative to the COCODE. The COCODE, and not the alcalde, decides the development priorities for

the town, which construction companies will do the work, and how the work will be audited. This new law represents a substantial decrease in the power of the alcalde, both to win political support through favoritism and to enrich himself and his friends and family through illicit funds. José Antulio Morales simply ignored the COCODE. It was new at the time and José took advantage of this to ignore it. Mariano Díaz inherited the institution more squarely, so he devised an alternative approach: he simply appointed, where possible, the heads of the COMUDES from among his own group of followers. During the first three monthly sessions, when Mariano was facing criticism (which was every session) he would simply call for a show of hands or an 'Aye' or 'Nay' vote to close debate. Since he had the majority, he controlled the entire show. This angered members of the other political parties, including many Ladinos, who simply began to circumvent the COCODE as well, blaming Mariano Díaz for playing unfairly. At least by the time I was there, the COCODE served as a space for debate that had previously not existed. There was some additional level of oversight and accountability for the Mayor, and a growing awareness that there was a legal sanction against a "one man decides" framework for development.

FORGING A NEW STATE-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

As I foreshadowed in chapter 3, this development strategy has failed to foster a Mayan identification with the nation-state. But it did help end Mayan support for radical politics, although not exactly in the way that state or AID planners imagined. So how did it happen? I argue that state development programs are shaped by the threat of state violence, and they also exacerbate and perpetuate the disfiguration of Mayan politics that violence initiates.

It appears that these new dynamics have enacted a shift in the way that Mayans imagine the state. These programs have made it possible for Mayans to imagine the state as a protector of life. There is considerable evidence that the advent of project-centered development has established in community members' minds a belief in a narrative of progress. Progress is visible. The state is a different creature than it was before. I have had numerous conversations with villagers who have pointed to specific projects to talk about how much better their lives were now from before. If nothing else, the state makes the appearance that it is making a concerted effort to alleviate poverty and to raise the quality of life of Mayans. The difference between the before and after is indeed remarkable, and not lost on villagers. But understanding the political significance of projects requires digging deeper than this story, which, although pervasive, is a quick gloss that hides many of the nuanced in the state-community relationship that has been re-worked through the peculiar form of development politics that has taken shape over the last 25 years.

One important element in the contemporary state-village dynamic is a transformation of community political demands. Another important effect of project-centered development is to enshrine projects as the sole political objective. Through the work of the development committee leaders, community desires are more transparent to state bureaucracies than they have ever been before. These desires are also constituted in ways that create options for these bureaucracies in terms of their ability to exert a measure of control on their relationship to communities. If a party knows that a community has several demands, they might elect to satisfy only one of them, the one listed by the community as "most important." Larger projects could be for people who are strong followers. Smaller ones are often used as a guarantee of future projects, a promise. State institutions keep statistics on individual villages in multiple *municipios*,

allowing them to track the progress of each. This makes visible inequalities and concentrations, which makes a more systematic approach. No community will be so completely behind that it feels left out. No community should receive so many projects as to make other communities jealous. It also helps to constitute new norms for village development, something fairly consistent between multiple villages. This could, for instance, operate as a partial check to the potentially disruptive effects of a particular *alcalde's* political distribution of development.[7] Transparency made possible by the efforts of community development committee system make possible a forms of economical regulation of community desires by the state. An additional characteristic of this is that each village, as a discrete and bounded entity, is the base unit of all discussions of community well-being (Stepputat 2001).[8]

In addition to public political discourse, development project procurement devours the political energies and overwhelms the organizational capacities of village hierarchies, now organized around the development committee system. Village level political organizing is today almost completely dedicated to the pursuit of specific development projects. This is a time consuming activity, obligating committee leaders to lose many days of work. In my entire time in Los Altenses, I was witness to no community discussions that were attempts to analyze the national situation, such as the state of the Peace Accords, the objectives and strategies of social movements or the ideology of any particular political party.[9] The one exception to this that I know about from recent years were the discussions prior to the 2003 elections about the Ríos Montt's involvement in the violence. The numerous meetings that I did witness were entirely dedicated to the discussion of development. Village meetings in which decisions to support particular candidates is the matter at hand focus specifically on comparisons of the projects offered to the villager by each candidate, and the likelihood of the candidate

to win and to make good on their promises. Coming a close second was the issue of crime and insecurity, which has been a growing fear as property crimes have become more common and more violent.[10] In addition, it is significant that, in fitting with the official discourses on development, Mayans overwhelmingly focus their desires for village well-being, and in many instance individual well-being, directly on the state.

In addition to big projects, the spoils of politics are often basic grains, fertilizers, cooking oil, chickens, cereal and jobs—the basic ingredients of daily sustenance, life itself. Although talk of assistance is endless, the projects that arrive are insufficient to meet the needs. The simultaneous regularity and inadequacy of individual assistance programs have transformed widespread economic insecurity into widespread feelings of dependency on the state for survival. For example, when I asked rural farmers—and I must have asked dozens—what would happen if the state stopped subsidizing fertilizer, several said they would *"just not eat."* Despite these concerns, there is little focus on what they can do for themselves to ensure their own well-being outside of development fortuitous relationships with external actors, people perceived to have access to the state chief among them. Food aid, insufficient as it is, still does not bring most children in San Pedro up to standards for nutrition.

Moreover, the state's newly-minted identity as protector and provider of Mayan life did not displace its prior incarnation as destroyer of Mayan lives. Conditioning assistance reinforces the sense of powerlessness established by state violence. Conditioning aid reminds villagers of the norms of political passivity as defined initially by state violence: non-participation in social movements. By presenting the possibility for its removal, it serves as a new consequence of disobedience. This was explicit in the early years of projects, but is still a factor. After the neighboring *municipio* Colotenango elected a URNG mayor in 2000, a Mayan named Arturo Mendez, many feared an end to

state assistance for the town. This was in fact a threat made during the campaign by their opponents. After the election, when Colotenango had indeed continued to receive state funds, from what was by then the 10% tax, rumors still circulated in the department that they no longer received any funds from the state because of their political affiliation. Although proof was difficult to produce, many still believe that Colotenango has been disadvantaged as a result. My friends in *retornado* villages in other towns report not being taken into consideration for development projects because of their perceived, and real, association with guerrilla organizations.[11]

The prevalence of this disempowered feeling became especially evident to me when I watched the encounters between villagers wanting projects and party representatives and *alcaldes* they hoped would help them get them. When villagers came on Saturday and Sunday mornings to Edgar's house, hoping to get his approval for a project, they came with their hats in their hands. They spoke to Edgar with their eyes turned to the floor, in very respectful language. Their petitions were elaborate pleas for support, with a somewhat desperate quality. Many of these petitioners, leaders in their villages, used such uncommon deference because they felt it was necessary, given that they were literally at the mercy of someone else's decision. People who approached me looking for projects often used the same, impassioned tone, emphasizing the stark necessities they were confronting in their villages. I think that the fear of abandonment is intimately linked to the overwhelming sense of disempowerment *vis-à-vis* the state produced originally by state violence that I describe in more detail in the MOSCAMED chapter.

The URNG party, at least partially, concedes the risk of state abandonment. In addition to refuting this as false threat made to manipulate the vote, they have elaborated a critique of project-oriented development itself, which they see as a diversion away from

the 'more important' matters of political organization and pursuit of the Peace Accords. This is not limited to members of the *Asociación* CEIBA. One man, a URNG member from a village with strong past ties to the guerrilla, echoed these opinions based on his experience in his village: *"I have it analyzed, about the projects. On the one hand, they're good; on the other they're bad. Maybe I'm mistaken but I think the people sell themselves out for a gift. I accept [projects] but I'm not going to vote for their party."* This argument is voiced in less explicit terms by many villagers who are not aligned with the left. My own analysis of the political effects of project-centered development coincide in many ways with this argument, although with some important revisions, as will be made evident throughout this chapter.

State development is a reminder of sovereign power. Rural Mayans measure the value or productivity of these programs not in relation to other political alternatives—which are disqualified—but to the threat of violence. Heightening this perception is the fact that the politics surrounding community development projects are predicated upon an image of the state as "vertically encompassing" Mayan communities, reinforcing its claims to dominate social force relations (Gupta and Ferguson 2002). These understandings were dramatized by the FRG's promise to pay $500 to Mayans who had served in state-mandated civil patrols (anti guerrilla militias) if they joined the party. Names were collected on a laptop computer. The FRG candidate assured them that the computer would "know" how they voted, adding that God would too. This was a very effective vote getting strategy the basis of which is linking a promise for resources to a threat of punishment, the certainty of which is guaranteed by a high-tech fetish: a laptop, a mobile panopticon, especially for folks who know little about computers. The gift of resources is an unsubtle, if often un-remarked, reminder of the state's capacity for violence, knowledge that dampens local feelings of political agency. An FRG party

affiliate denied the computer ever went to the villages, but admitted that "*manipulación hubo"* (there was manipulation). Conditioning development on political obedience and party affiliation reenacts the power of the state over Mayan life it in a slightly different context, and therefore is a way of reproducing the terms of this relationship, albeit in a less dramatic manner.

WAR IN THE VILLAGES

In addition to changing Mayan imaginaries of the state and development, community development has contributed to a breakdown of communal relations and political unity in the majority of villages in San Pedro. Politicizing insufficient development gives rise to a reduced conception of politics as a zero-sum competition for scarce resources. This sentiment was expressed from all sides. A young Mayan man, Sergio, who was graduating high-school at the top of his class at the time of my fieldwork, told me he thought about it in this way: "*They say that politicians lie. Those than win, win for lies. For that reason, maybe it's better to just find a party for your own personal interests. Joining a party is how a person can find a job. If you don't join a party, you are left out of work."* By the time I arrived in Los Altenses, villagers habitually looked upon many of their own neighbors as threats, people competing against them for access to basic resources that everyone needs to survive. Even when the parties that they supported changed, this fundamental division remained.[12] Several made an analogy between politics and sports. One of the political leaders in Los Altenses told me that, *"Politics is like fútbol. There has to be a winner and a loser." "That is how politics is",* said a leader from a different party in the same village, *"you help your friends and the people who helped you win when you come into power. There is not one party that is any different, even if they say they are."* In this conception, there is little

room for compromise. The same friend told me that the political strategies adopted by the candidates are ones that they are instructed to use by the political parities![13] In this type of politics, one side will be happy, and the other people will be sad. The foreclosure of the field of political possibilities is built into this knowledge of scarcity. The fact that the insufficient amount of resources being offered, by the state, is equal to the amount of resources available imbues the existing social order with a sense of inevitability. If contesting state definitions of scarcity was one of the central premises of the revolutionary discourse, such a critical angle is certainly not a current factor in the minds of the Mayan villagers I spoke with.

Villagers do not simply join the same party; villages divide into different parties. This is driven by the parties themselves, which increasingly attempt to entice village subsectors, rather than entire villages, with promises of development. The tentative political unity that emerged in Los Altenses after the war was broken when all of the followers of a certain party were not treated equally in the distribution of development projects. Close friends, family members, and the most dedicated supporters received numerous valuable development projects. When those who had been left out of the bounty formed their own parties, and lost, they were left out of development again, this time because they supported the political opposition. This pattern has been elaborated for several electoral cycles over a relatively short time, but enough to produce a noticeable effect. This mentality led to conflict between villagers after the elections. Younger members of competing families from different political parties got in fights on several occasions, still mad at one another over the previous election.

This cycle of division was related to the decision of a large group of villagers to support the FRG. Candelaria Velazquez is a woman in her mid 40s. She is married and has two children. She lives in a large house with a mill. Her husband does carpentry

work. She is a evangelical woman who makes a decent living by praying for people and acting as a faith healer. She leaves regularly, making visits to people in different villages in San Pedro to pray or heal. She holds prayer sessions in her own home almost daily when she is there. Candelaria campaigned hard for Mariano Díaz. She spoke on his behalf in villages all over San Pedro. She would pray regularly for God to bless his campaign. Her entire house is painted blue and white and proudly features the FRG insignia. She told me that she "number one" for Mariano, and that he had offered her a position in the corporation, which she had refused to continue her ministry. When I asked Candelaria if she voted for people on the basis of their religion, she assured me that she did not, *"We don't make an exception for anyone. We treat everyone the same. I will support anyone as long as they are really Christian."* Mariano Díaz does not attend the same church as hers, but she assured me that *"it is the same word of God."* In her perspective, on I heard from numerous evangelicals, *"The Catholics also preach the same word of God, the difference is that they don't follow through. They still drink alcohol. They still have* caseras *(adulterous lovers)."* When I talked to Maria about Ríos Montt, Maria said that he was probably a murderer. So what made her join the FRG? And what warranted her invocation of religious support for Mariano? Her religious fervor for Mariano was generated by her anger over project favoritism in her own village during the regime of José Antulio Morales. Exasperated that I didn't already know, she explained in great detail:

> They say that we're poor and don't work, but they only give *viviendas* (houses) to their family members and good friends. Only for them even though other people sign up for the projects. I signed up, I handed in my form, and afterwards I was told that it was not valid. 'Yours didn't go through' I was told. Even though it had a signature. They don't advise about most projects. Look at his friends' houses. They all got new ones and they already had houses! Some of us others are using plastic and ranchitos (houses made of bound sticks). They signed up

> and didn't get anything. [Viviendas] should go to the most needy, everyone equally.
>
> There are auxiliares who are supposed to advise us. One came today to tell us that we would be doing work to maintain the road. But they don't' advise about food, medicine, or vaccines for animals. When we don't know anything, their chickens are already vaccinated!
>
> We call him Chepe chuch (Chepe the dog) because he grabs everything for himself. His friends in our village are already accustomed. Ask [person's name] where he got 300 cinder blocks! That is the villages' money, it was what was left over on a village housing project! They grabbed it. That is why there is division. There is a war between groups. We don't go to reunions anymore. It's better to work with your own sweat. They don't do anything for us. It can be houses, it can be food assistance, all for them! With Natanael, he would give a little bit to everyone. But Chepe only gives to his supporters. We helped Antulio in the beginning, but he didn't give us any thanks. Not one cent. There were 150-200 houses [that were to be distributed] in the whole town. But they didn't give them to the poor people. Poor people are pushed to the side. Some people also don't like Chepe because he had caseras. But most were tired of the favoritism. El hace excepcion de personas (He distinguishes between people, he discriminates).

Candelaria was incensed at the intense favoritism shown to José Antulio's supporters in the distribution of projects. Here the idea that state bureaucrats exert some control on this process, trying to make development even and just between communities, suffers greatly. This discrimination gives almost no place to the existence of real need among certain, ignored sectors of the communities. Members of the community hierarchy place their party allegiances above the duties associated with their *cargo*, keeping new resources a secret from those who were already assumed to be excluded from sharing the loot because they are not part of the group. People who already have more continue to take more, furthering existing disparities. She even questions their devotion to God. *"They only say that they're Christians."* She suggests a more ethical solution would be to give the projects to people who are in the most need of them. Because of her prominent role in the Pentecostal Church, her message was especially persuasive among her co-religioners. But this theme resonated with many who were not Pentecostal, including a

sizable number of Catholics in her own village, some of whom actively disliked her on a personally.[14] If the promise of development coupled with the threat of violence helps explain Mayans alignment with neo-conservative parties in San Pedro in 1993 and after, that *plus* local opposition to the negative outcomes I have just described led to an FRG victory in 2003. Villagers responded enthusiastically to the FRG candidate's vehemently critique of corruption in prior administrations and promises of aid to groups excluded from past rounds of projects.

In addition, village headmen (almost always men) compete for access to the fruits of corruption from development projects implemented under their stewardship. I looked into a huge mess of a fight that emerged between rival village headmen over a school project in Los Altenses. The current development committee head, let's call him Artemio, had been in control for less than one year. It was his first time to run the committee. Before, the spot had been held by Miguel, who was seen as much more *capacitado* and experienced. Miguel told me that he "let Artemio have the job," because felt excluded before. Artemio had told me as much on several occasions. Now, with Artemio in control of the committee, and while his political ally Mariano Díaz was in control in DECOPAZ, DECOPAZ approved a school renovation project for the village. What ensued is still a matter of whose story you believe. The following summaries I pieced together out of several discussions with all of the major parties to the conflict.

Artemio's Story

> Artemio plays the victim. He says that he had the school approved, and it was going out in his name. He was very happy. Then, Chepe got jealous, because he wanted to have the project go out in his name, and not in the name of Mariano Díaz. Miguel also was jealous of the money that Artemio stood to make off the deal. (On such a large project, a ten percent kickback was standard.) He says Miguel broke into his house and stole the *escritura* to the committee. Then Miguel and Chepe called a reunion of the villagers and criticized the plan for the school approved by Artemio. They said it was only a one-story school. They

> presented their own plan for a school that had two stories. The upstairs could be used as a meeting space for village reunions. The villagers in attendance voted for Miguel to take over the committee and for the school that had two floors.[15] However, the school plan that they approved was already for two levels. The only difference between the plans was who got the money. Chepe and Miguel lied to the villagers for their own personal interest. Miguel broke the law because committee leadership positions are elected by the community for a two year period.

Miguel's Story

> Miguel says that the school that was approved was only for one level. The community did not like how the other committee was working. Artemio was planning to steal money from the school project, almost Q75,000 to divide between the committee members. They voted for the new committee and the new school instead.

The two men, uncle and nephew, wound up wrestling in the schoolyard and were still estranged seven months later, both accusing each other of corruption and personal interest. This is just one more characteristic of a political environment in which personal interest is pursued at the expense of the neighbors.

José Antulio Morales had certainly leaped in economic stature, buying trucks, properties in the department capital, and land. These all fueled the rumors of malfeasance. In addition, indigenous from the communities began to complain that Morales had begun to think of himself as better than other people, and began to treat people callously the way that Ladinos used to treat indigenous petitioners. In addition to admitting to project favoritism, one person who had worked with Morales compalined that, *"Chepe was only interested in working on big projects, with contractors, to be able to take out his percentage. If there was an administrative project, a necessity, he didn't want it."*

Corruption has another worrisome consequence. Widespread corruption has discredited most indigenous politicians. They are almost universally seen and talked

about as personally interested. Disrepute has spread to village development leaders, who are increasingly cut in on the action. Politicians, and politics in general, is seen as a domain controlled by the basest of human motivations. It is disheartening that, just as Mayans enter into spaces of political authority, those spaces themselves are becoming seen as increasingly compromised and illegitimate. It is as if these issues were irrelevant when Ladinos were in control. It is true, that the possibilities for corruption have multiplied alongside the processes of Mayan inclusion in township politics. This is incidental, and in some ways fortuitous. Delivering on development was what allowed Mayan politicians to be taken seriously as political actors and leaders in the first place. Now this access to development is the means by which they have caused many to fall into pessimism regarding the future of Mayan politics. These concerns were expressed by an older man, and one of the first *catequistas* in the town and a former sympathizer with the guerrilla movement. He commented grimly on the state of the local Mayan movement in the wake of the reign of Antulio Morales:

> The struggle now is that a Mayan should govern. For years only Ladinos were in the government. Now there are indigenous, but perhaps it is the same as before, or even worse. We have an example with the alcaldes here in San Pedro. The problem now is embezzlement of money. They just come to steal. Before there were only three candidates and one would win. Now there are 14 because everyone wants to get some money. That is why Guatemala is fucked. We don't know what to do to resolve this.

DANGEROUS NEW SPACES FOR EMPOWERMENT

At the same time, the state's shift to inclusive political strategies opens new avenues for Mayan agency. As violence wanes, Mayan leaders across the political spectrum invoke the state's responsibility for development and its failure to deliver. Concerned citizens have formed Civic Committees or joined leftist parties for the express

purpose of addressing these concerns. Neo-authoritarian resurgence in San Pedro was one example. A young college-educated Mayan man and FRG advisor in San Pedro put it this way, "We are *re-fun-didos* (sunk to the bottom) in corruption. There are no good guys. Yes, Ríos Montt is bad, but this is a double-edged sword. We are doing something good here while the country gets worse." Díaz and his followers campaigned on the promise that development projects should go to those in the communites who need them the most. Despite such noble claims, the FRG's own tactics further enshrine the project-centric notion of politics, dependency relations and political divisions.

I spoke with several Mayans in San Pedro, most of them on the left, who articulated a criticism of state development programs as a divide and rule strategy, used to destroy Mayan political power. This study, which aims to describe how these strategies work, is in response to the concerns expressed to me by several friends of mine in the Mayan movement and on the left. It seems that Antulio Morales was begining to worry about the consequences of divisionist politics, after years of benefitting from it. According to Petrona Lazaro, after his second term had ended, Morales seemed perplexed by what he saw as the inevitable side effects of divisions wrought by party politics. Before the 2003 election, Morales had expressed to one of his political team members his desire to run a new kind of campaign, one without any false promises, favoritism and divisionism—all of which now seemed insperable from local politics. Morales too had seen the damage wrought by the favoritism tactics in the campaigns. Even though he was clearly in charge of the alcalde campaign for the ANN—the candidates were far less experienced. In this version, Morales disapproved when the new candidate, hungry for a victory, resorted to the same tactics of false promises, favoritism, machismo. But this change of heart and of strategy was too little too late. Morales lost control of the campaign, as he was in Hueuhuetenango working on his own campaign. It was by all

counts probably far too late to undo the effects of several electoral periods of power politics, and questionable decisionmaking.

What before was a competition between Ladinos and Mayans for development and power has become a contest between Mayans and their neighbors. But the struggle between Ladinos and indigenous over development seems to have grown steadily in intensity, not lessened. Many Ladinos to me expressed concern about indigenous control of the alcaldia. They are especially worried about Mariano Díaz. One elderly man, a former schoolteacher, told me that, *"this new person, Díaz, hates* Ladinos. *When he is talking in Mam, he says he wants to get rid of us. He says that there won't be any more projects for* Ladinos. *Antulio Morales was a crook, but at least he gave some projects to the* Ladinos. *This new one says he won't give any."* I heard from indigenous and Ladino alike claim that Mariano's campaign discourses were hostile towards Ladinos, pitting Ladinos against indigenous for projects. With the implications of FRG populism coming into clearer view undoubtedly explains a good deal of Ladino opposition to Díaz.

CONCLUSION: BEYOND '*PROYECTITUS*' AND DIVISION

If the aim of genocidal violence was to destroy an autonomous subaltern identity deemed a threat to the nation, it backfired, as evidenced by the resurgence of Mayan identity and politics after the violence. Opening a limited space for the inclusion of a sanctioned form of Mayan politics through development, however, has been much more insidious. Ferguson (1991) argues that development is a powerful transfer point for state power that reframes poverty as a technical problem while spreading networks of bureaucratic control. In this chapter, I have shown how development works synergistically with state violence. In this case, the combination was essential to re-organize the conceptual, affective, and material basis of revolutionary politics. Instead of

being united in a struggle against the state, Mayans compete with each other for access to state resources, while their marginal status in apartheid-like Guatemalan society remains unchanged, or gets worse. More than any ideology, Mayan support for the FRG, even among evangelicals, was one effect of a form of development politics that has divided community members. Mayans find it increasingly difficult to speak with one political voice and to collaborate with one another in collective political struggle. Many Mayans have contested the negative consequences of this strategy on Mayan communities. Several criticize it as an intentional strategy for rule, another means for the corrupt state and the rich to thwart Mayan political power. There was definitely a great deal of forethought, and continued attempts at strategic manipulation; but certainly not all of these effects described above were by design. Whatever one's opinion on this matter, it is clear that the decision by the prior generation of Mayan leaders to make a pact with big political parties has backfired, in ways that were probably not apparent to them when they made the agreement.

It should be obvious by now that I do not agree with the leftist critic of *proyectitus*, the idea that communities are accustomed to receiving projects and therefore become dazzled and distracted away from real political concerns. But I want to be very clear about the differences between my interpretation and this one. The *proyectitus* rendering has too many similarities with false consciousness, knowing that ideal or rational Mayan politics means uniting with leftist organizations. It also paints villagers as lazy, and unaware of the real costs of their political behavior. However, most of the villagers I spoke with, on the left and right, were quite aware of and concerned with most of the consequences described in this chapter. But they also had very real needs, which they felt were pressing enough to justify participating in the political process, as ugly as it was. Most of the Mayans I met talked about an obvious alternative to the current

development arrangement: giving projects to the neediest people in the communities. But, for personal interest or party policy, that does not happen.

Beyond these reasons, my central critique of proyectitus entails a difference of perspective, one informed by an appreciation of the historical dynamics of struggle between Mayan communities and the state. Rather than see development as a state imposition, we must see it as a response to Mayan political desires. Mayans asked for development. Now state legitimacy depends on their ability to deliver projects to rural communities. Communities now demand projects. People who cannot or will not deliver on these will not receive votes. It will be interesting to note how long the state can go on not fulfilling the demands that it stokes every three years with elections before the Mayan population decides that enough is enough. In fact, many Mayans point to criticisms between state promises to deliver the basic necessities and the inadequacy of projects to meet even their most basic needs. The more they see evidence of corruption, the more they are certain that the government that exists is incorrigible. In fact, discourses of corruption, like the MOSCAMED conspiracy, in addition to being one of the spaces through which the state is imagined (Gupta 1995), also provides the moral justification for its own elimination and replacement through electoral power. Mayans are thirsty for a political alternative, but pessimistic that one will emerge. To the extent that these discourses help to generate the widespread lack of confidence among rural Mayans regarding their political agency, these discourses of corruption and moral outrage reinforce power. However, they also contain an incontrovertible ethical justification for its replacement with another form of governance.

It is not enough, however, to declare the pact, which was made under conditions of extreme coercion in any case, illegitimate. It is necessary to find strategies to undo the forms of divisionism that have taken such deep root in such short time in the villages

throughout San Pedro, and, indeed, throughout the western highlands. Several strategies have already been identified. The COCODES is one of these strategies. It would also help for communities to devise their own 'rules of engagement' with political parties, or regulations specifying criteria for the distribution of development projects. Community unity behind a Civic Committee, espousing the same goals and endorsing a strict agreement to transparency—perhaps along the lines of what was imagined by Antulio Morales before his demise—would also produce interesting results. One option would be for community members to support the regional movement for an independent office of Accounting. There are other strategies, many of which might have already been in action, but passed underneath my radar. But the first step towards any of these solutions, I think, is not the adoption of a high-tech legal strategies, although I do not want to downplay the importance of these new regulatory frameworks; rather, the central problem is getting community members to trust each other enough to agree to a particular framework that will bring resources to communities in a way that does not privilege one group over the other. This chapter has been an attempt to draw attention to, and therefore defamiliarize, current practices that form the day-to-day reality of community development politics. I want this chapter to serve as a form of inquiry that invites community activists to think about and discuss the ways in which their own agency and identity has become bound up with, really fuel for, the current cycle of community divisions. This shows a direct link between Mayan agency, and contemporary forms of colonial political domination of Mayan communities. Examining these processes have evolved in San Pedro can hopefully clarify these processes in other communities, providing a valuable point of reflection for Mayans searching for a path to development in alignment with their immediate needs and long term political struggles for community autonomy.

NOTES

[1] It is well-documented that Mayan communities became targeted for development assistance as part of a larger state strategy to eliminate Mayan support for the guerrilla movement. Several authors have focused their research on the most extreme case of military development projects: the model community system which was established by the army after the worst of the violence to "round up" and re-educate Mayan villagers displaced by the army's genocidal rampage through the highlands (Smith 1990, Schirmer 1998). Along with projects, villagers were fed a stream of 'propaganda', not dissimilar to the narratives about the violence, the guerrilla and Mayan politics that were discussed in the chapter about local memory. Stoll (1988) provides evidence that in some cases evangelical religion was pushed alongside pro-army, nationalist ideology. Nelson (1999) shows how postwar state development programs attempt to create a vision of the state as the provider of basic resources, as the source and defender of life itself. Stepputat (2000) argues that development is one of the key agents of village governance in the postwar era.

[2] Stepputat (2000) makes several important observations about the effects of state development programs on community. However, he does not investigate differences between types of development politics and their relation to community political orientation. Also, his work is not focused on the collective understandings around development; rather the general relationship to the state that these programs establish. In this chapter, I am investigating the long-term effects of development and politics in a particular community, focusing on political imaginaries, community relations and affects.

[3] I heard reports of this in at least one community in San Pedro.

[4] In 2002, I worked as a grantwriter for a small Mayans women's collective in San Sebastian, a nearby town. But my grantwriting efforts there, and to finance a subsequent research project with CEIBA, were failures. Sometimes, the people who make such requests represent particular political parties; and helping them would mean taking their side in a local political battle, not a good role for an anthropologist trying to learn as much as possible from members of all different political parties. It is simply impossible to honor requests from all communities in San Pedro.

[5] When I pointed this illegality out to one of Mariano's close advisors, he said that another candidate who runs a local development institution had also run. In this logic, two wrongs may not make a right, but they are more fair than one wrong.

[6] Midway through his term however, Diaz seemed to be recuperating. Many projects have arrived and his base seems intact. There is no clear party with the strength to contest him. A year later, when he had still not delivered the laminas, people were quite angry and some have discussed killing him for projects. The community who was angry at him threatened to lynch the alcalde if he did not make good on his promise to buy them land on which to make a village cemetery.

[7] For obvious reasons, ethnographic details of the strategic planning that takes place in state development institutions, especially politicized ones, is lacking. It is not therefore unreasonable to speculate.
[8] One of the only exceptions to this is DECOPAZ. DECOPAZ that worked in micro-regions composed of several villages. But even in DECOPAZ's microregions, each community appointed one representative whose job was to look out for their own villages' best interest.
[9] I am referring here to the types of dialogue present in community meetings. These discussions are not completely absent, but they are dominated by external institutions, such as CEIBA, and many others.
[10] Several people in San Pedro have been murdered during thefts in the last two years.
[11] This is complicated by the popular, stigmatizing perception that *retornados* are pampered by international organizations and have come to expect things be given to them. This is a sentiment echoed by even left-leaning residents in the town of Nenton, in reference to their returned neighbors.
[12] Although in Los Altenses, these divisions also mapped onto familial divisions over notions of capacidad, noted in the last chapter, this dynamic of division over project favoritism remain constant in other villages where such a clear line between families was not in place.
[13] It would be interesting to know the rationale behind the decision to require these divisive political tactics. It is possible that this is yet another intentional military-development relay.
[14] People regularly criticize Candelaria because she dresses, as they say, ladina. She does not wear traje. People also call her a witch because before she became a Pentecostal and started healing with olive oil, she used to cure people with teas made of various grasses. There was also an implication that she was active in the guerrilla and responsible for assassinating a man in the village. Now her reputation as a strange woman was being somewhat revised, at least among some villagers, given that she was a respected member of a powerful political party. People who opposed her politically however, hated her even more than ever.
[15] Villagers seem to be in general agreement with the idea that decisions made by whoever shows up to a reunion, are binding for the entire community. Although no one mentioned it to me, and I forgot to ask, I am fairly certain that the villagers in attendance were told in advance to attend, and that they were mostly Miguel's extended family members.

CONCLUSION: BENEATH DEMOCRACY AND POPULISM

THE NARRATIVE OF GUATEMALAN DEMOCRACY

Since the Peace Accords, a powerful narrative has emerged that constructs Guatemala as a non-problematic democratic polity, just as good as any other. This classification of Guatemala as democratic has slowly calcified and become hegemonic among conservatives in the Guatemalan and US governments, and saturates national and international media.[1] The post-Accords decade is now seen as an arc of progressive departure from the violence of the past. Discourses of democracy criticize the excesses of past violence, but assert that it was at some level necessary to defeat "communist subversives" and to prevent Guatemala from becoming "another Cuba." Furthermore, the narrative of Guatemala as a democracy completely denies *any* operation of power in the constitution of the social. It asserts that violence has no bearing on current politics. Violence is part of the past, not the present, and is only of anecdotal importance today. This construction grossly, and in many cases cynically and purposefully, underestimates the impact of decades of extreme violence and intense militarization on Mayan political consciousness and behavior. It also normalizes the effects of centuries of colonialism and exploitation on shaping the contemporary economic, social and cultural marginalization of rural Mayans. This soothing and depoliticizing discourse protects Guatemala from international sanction and pressure, even despite the non-implementation of the Peace Accords, the survival nearly intact of colonial social hierarchies and the authoritarian structure of the state.

Conservatives in Guatemala and the US celebrate contemporary Mayan right, which is a huge material prop for this narrative of freedom.[2] In this story, Mayan support

for neo-authoritarian regimes must be seen as their "democratic free will." This triumphant discourse defines democracy as narrowly as possible, focusing exclusively on the existence of free, or relatively free, elections and disregarding historical and political context. This narrative does not exist peacefully beside other dissenting ones; it is literally backed up by a still-ruthless army and an elite controlled media apparatus. Groups and individuals who espouse different viewpoints are routinely harassed, killed and silenced by quasi-official groups with impunity. Even non-violent public protests are often brutally repressed. Indeed, this narrative of Guatemalan politics is also central to the way that violence persists during 'peace'. This depoliticized framing of social reality as democratic allows selective violence against social movements to be narrated as vital to protect democracy and economic stability, whose only hope, supposedly, lies in the fickle attentions of foreign investment capital.[3] State development programs provide another source of material support for this narrative, demonstrating a commitment to include Mayans in a pluri-ethnic nation.

The most common and most compelling alternative to this power-free discourse is the contention that thirty-six years of war, genocide and social militarization created a "culture of terror" in the Mayan highlands, and that is now maintained by continued selective state violence and impunity. This narrative is reinforced by the findings of the two truth commissions and various human rights and international solidarity organizations. In this vision, fear still forecloses the space for democratic choice. This narrative offers a vital corrective to conservative discourses on democracy that must deny any continued effects of decades of extreme state violence and Orwellian social control on Mayan political behavior. However, the "culture of terror" argument is dated; it is unable to account for the substantial, albeit limited, changes in Guatemalan political culture, including: the Peace Accords; democratization; legalization of leftist parties and

social movements; Truth Commissions; the Pan Mayan movement; and demilitarization. Certainly these changes are not lost on rural Mayans, who must have formulated new understandings of the possibilities inherent in new political spaces. This disconnect disqualifies counter-discourses on violence and lends credence to conservative attempts to ignore its continued effects.

The analysis in this dissertation is motivated by the conviction that democracy is never non-problematic, but that the effects of violence are never fixed. Standards for measuring and evaluating democracy must take into account the way that current approaches to governance operate in relation to a countries' or region's history. Without such contextualization, democracy itself becomes a meaningless phrase. Each country is only held to their own standard, no matter how deplorable. Current dynamics must be able to be represented as an improvement over past conditions, but there is no expectation that authoritarian practices stop entirely. We need to consider its corrosive effects on the meaning of democracy at a particular historical moment. Without this, neoliberalism or "globalization" becomes the era of low standards and low expectations. However, contemporary understandings of the continued political relevance of state violence must be revised in light of emerging realities lest they lose more ground against conservative attempts to locate counterinsurgency violence squarely in the past. By refusing to reify the effects of violence on its victims this perspective emphasizes the ability for human agents to resist and change the meanings of violence. I am not the first to write from this perspective.

FROM DISCIPLINARY ASSIMILATION TO NEOLIBERAL MULTICULTURALISM

Hale (2006) describes two qualitative shifts in the way that rural Mayans have been governed in the second half of the twentieth century. Before the 1960s, indigenous

were treated as both "separate and unequal." As it sounds, indigenous were seen as clearly inferior "Indians" who were relegated to their subordinate status. There was no hope for social advancement. Basic education was not made available, and collective attempts at empowerment, almost nonexistent since the Democratic Revolution, were not tolerated. After the early stage of genocidal violence, "the army sought not to eliminate but to control the indigenous population, not even to eliminate the material bases of Mayan culture, but rather to reshape them, with the utmost violence if necessary, cutting out the cancer of subversion and dissent, affirming a space to be Indian within constraints imposed by a fiercely militarized disciplinary state" (67). After this point, the state embarked on a strategy of "disciplinary assimilation," which offered "equality, cultural respect, and long term assimilation toward a dominant, (Ladino defined) norm of national unity" (72). Meanwhile, the army worked in community development to "consolidate its image" as promoters of peace and reconstruction, while furthering the "two armies" discourse (68). The Catholic Church, by this time largely evacuated of more radical priests, echoed a similar version of this assimilationist message, which Hale qualifies as "universalist."

A second shift in state ideology came in the early 1990s due to pressure, funds and initiatives from Mayan organizations, international organizations ranging from small NGOs to the World Bank, and donor countries: "By the mid 1990s, state initiatives, programs and declarations in favor of multiculturalism had accumulated to the point where the basic principles stood beyond question: contemporary Mayan identity merits recognition and respect; Mayans have collective rights grounded in cultural difference (74). The most compelling example of this shift is the Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which called for a deep and abiding change in the not only the official legal stance towards indigenous rights claims of all sorts, and also in the national

character and self-conception. This new state ideology came alongside a renewed commitment to neoliberal policies, evident as well in the limitations of the Accords and in the policies of the Arzú regime. In the countryside, political parties began to seek Mayan candidates, who were able to redirect development funds towards the villages. Government institutions, as well as international donors, began to work directly on Mayan issues and target Mayan populations. Neoliberal multiculturalism, in this view, can recognize collectivities as subjects of special rights because the "key defining feature of neoliberalism is not strict, market oriented individualism, as many contend, but rather that restructuring society such that people come to govern themselves according to the tenets of global capitalism"(75). Simply put, the state valorizes and indeed promotes a neutralized version of Mayan politics, one incapable or not disposed towards massive collective political action, especially not of the kind that would threaten the existing social order. They also create new ambiguities, mainly the specific rights claims that can be attached to Mayan cultural difference. Contemporary cultural politics contest these very spaces.

Hale suggests that this message was reinforced by a wave of Mayan centered development initiatives, which strongly preferred to work directly with Mayans. This new logic was also complemented, at least in Chimaltenango, by a shift to *maquila* production, which allowed indigenous to bypass Ladinos to enter the labor market. Moreover, Hale provides statistics that seem to indicate, again in Chimaltenango, a process whereby Mayan-majority towns to further "Mayanize" and for Ladino population centers to similarly concentrate amounting to a slow but noticeable "bifurcation of the racial demography," that corresponds to "political ascendancy" of Mayans in Mayan towns, and Ladinos in Ladino strongholds (78). This space was occupied by Mayan organizations, some of which made radical claims for collective rights, and a wave of

indigenous *alcaldes*, few of whom endorsed anything beyond the "indigenous universalist" position (80).[4] However, by the end of the 1990s, doctrines of assimilation had been deeply critiqued by Mayan activists with support from international donors.

As with the transition from "separate and unequal" to "disciplinary assimilation" the shift to neoliberal multiculturalism came in "jumps and starts," and remains uneven and incomplete. Ultimately, Hale sees the apparent contradiction between residual and emergent forms is mutually productive "multiculturalism opens space for cultural recognition while disciplinary assimilation helps keep that space strictly limited" (82). The separation between leftist and Mayan politics is further cemented by a memory politics heavily influenced by state repression. This mix of authoritarian assimilationism and neoliberal multiculturalism follows a continental trend in hybrid governance.

Hale draws several conclusions regarding contemporary Mayan politics. Hale points to a layering of "disciplinary assimilation" and "neoliberal multiculturalism" which together "saturate Chimaltenango with mixed messages: repudiation of racism but continuation of the same ideas in a more gentle guise; respect for indigenous culture, yet subtle ongoing disdain for things Indian; encouragement of respectful intercultural relations, yet deep skepticism about people's claims to be Mayan" (80). This leaves people with, in general, two paths:

> With moderate access to resources, a supportive educational setting, positive role models, and organizational opportunities, indigenous Chimaltecos can successfully negotiate these contradictory messages and follow the path of Mayan empowerment. However, many others find a path of least resistance in practices of assimilation, made more attractive by the power of universal rights (80).

In such uncertain terrain, the clear tendency is for indigenous to affirm universalist ideologies and avoid strident cultural politics. In this argument, this peculiar space created by this hybrid regime of governance also creates the conditions for FRG politics in the highlands. He poses the question that the populist rhetoric of the FRG, with its

stronger identification with cultural rights than other parties, attracts Mayans who are disenchanted with or cynical regarding leftist politics. The FRG is the party for Mayan-centric indigenous.

This reading of Guatemalan politics digests and makes analytical sense of an extraordinarily large body of data about a complicated set of interrelated processes. By drawing our attention towards shifts in state ideology, it allows us to see the limitations and ambiguities in each, as well as points of transformation. It shows Mayan agency on a shifting political terrain reorganized by power. This analysis encourages an understanding of Mayan support for center-right and neoconservative regimes outside of the frames of state repression or false consciousness.

The ethnographic data and analysis in this dissertation provide support for many aspects of this description. They also add dimension to this picture, and complicates it on some key points. It achieves this by focusing directly on Mayan responses to shifting state strategies, which themselves aim to produce spatial, affective and ideological effects. This focus fleshes out how Mayans have experienced and responded to shifts in governing strategies, and provides key insights that further our understanding of current support for both conservative and neo-authoritarian regimes. In particular, my research suggests that Mayan support for neoauthoritarian regimes is not primarily ideological. The success of these parties only makes sense in relationship to the transformation of the Mayan political imaginaries and of the political field by counterinsurgency strategies. The success of the FRG has to be understood in relationship to the continued effects of counterinsurgency measures on local Mayan imaginaries of the state, development and community. I provide a genealogy of how governance has effected transformations of the conceptual and affective structures through which rural Mayans understand politics and form their political identities and community relationships. I show how these

transformations result in a new Mayan-state relationship, characterized by a new imagination of the state and development that create new community divisions. Seeing no viable political alternative, Mayans who share investments in both Mayan nationalism and revolutionary narratives engage in relationships to the state for short-term gains. The pursuit of well-being through state sanctioned forms of development perpetuates the sense of powerlessness while undermining community relations. The rise of the FRG is due to the fact that it is the party the most adept at identifying and exploiting these divisions.

THE DISFIGURATION OF MAYAN POLITICS

My investigation of the history of indigenous political organizing in San Pedro Necta shows how a distinctive political imaginary and field of possibility emerged when grassroots activism for ethnic equality and empowerment encountered the revolutionary movement in the mid-1970s. Struggles for national level reforms inspired by revolutionary organizing and narratives were always constituted in a dialogic relationship to local struggles for ethnic equality. Many rural Mayans in San Pedro Necta had either sympathized deeply with or had themselves participated enthusiastically in the revolution, despite deeply felt criticisms of their strategies and their cultural politics. Many Mayans that had participated fully had never fully trusted the guerrilla. The violence either killed, or drove into exile, the most active and charismatic members of that generation of Mayan political activists. The pattern of state violence in San Pedro indicates a concerted attempt to break the link between indigenous identity and radical politics of any kind.

Starting with these initial kidnappings and assassinations, counterinsurgency strategies progressively undermined the conceptual, narrative, and affective conditions of

leftist and progressive politics, creating new spaces for political agency. In a testimony to Mayan political agency, new political organizations formed in Mayan communities after extreme violence and during intense militarization. Their goals were development and Mayan inclusion in town politics. State strategies also opened new spaces for these political movements, which occupied them cautiously. Past and continued counterinsurgency governing strategies altered the conceptions and narratives that animated these Mayan activists, and forced them to seek their goals on a completely different political terrain.

My research revealed that most Mayans in San Pedro, regardless of class, religion, or political party, identify with what Hale would call "Mayan-centric" ideologies. In addition, they tend to embrace most of the ideological positions of the revolutionary left, if not their specific strategies, and even though they tend not to participate in these groups. They continue to be enthralled with leftist narratives of capital and the state. Even many of those who do not outwardly espouse leftist politics or political strategies, find themselves in agreement with most of the core tenets of the revolutionary worldview. There are strong counter-state identifications, anti-capitalist sentiments, all meshed and seen as continuous with a strong current of opposition to Ladino domination. It is obvious when talking to Mayans that even though revolutionary thinking, even when the specific relationship to leftist politics in the past is denied and to the extent that it is inconsistent with other forms of politics or ideologies, still remains a solid foothold in common sense. The long-term effects of these counter-insurgency strategies on the directions and strategies of this movement, twenty years later, gave traction to FRG politics, a party that was anathema to the Mayan activists who started the local movement. They have, temporarily at least, lost control of the movement that they helped to found.

My chapter on memory provides additional insight into Hale's discussion of how official memory came to dominate among rural Mayans. During the war, Mayans were invested in the two armies narrative strategy for their lives. In addition it shows that, rather than persuasion, post-violence identities formed around, and became invested in, state-sanctioned truths about the Mayan political past. In the decade and a half after the decisive military defeat of the guerrilla, the ability for certain people to think of themselves, and be thought of as intelligent according to discourses of capacidad, as ethical subjects according to discourses of human rights, and as a legitimate victims according to discourses of state definitions of criminality, performs a similar function. These investments in specific contours of an emerging sanctioned identity created the conditions for the perpetuation of what first arose as a strategic denial, dovetailing with an new state legitimation strategy that allowed limited criticism of state violence, within a larger discursive frame that also condemned the guerrilla. Alongside the reshaping of identities, opportunistic Mayans espouse ahistorical discourses that sanitize the army's role in past violence and obscure past Mayan politics.

These processes have stifled local memorial processes, and have resulted in the contemporary conceptual separation between Mayan and revolutionary struggles and profoundly shapes the way that Mayan advancement is imagined and practiced by the new generation of Mayan political leaders. One of the most devastating consequences is a historical amnesia and a corresponding political disorientation among an emerging generation of Mayan professionals and among political leaders who know little of the origins of the Mayan movement locally or nationally, and have little understanding of the stakes of the revolutionary movement. This disorientation is especially pronounced among FRG candidates, selected, it seems, for their opportunism and their ignorance of the stakes of past political struggles as much as their charisma and Mayan identity.

Nevertheless, despite these investments, the new discourses taking hold in the political spaces opened by the Peace Accords have begun a process of rethinking and re-narrating official history, as well as the narrative frames that have dominated for the last decade and a half.

In addition to these effects on local memorial processes, state violence affects Mayan sense of the politically possible and of their own political agency. State violence continues to target groups whose actions challenge state authority, aim to influence state policy, or challenge the prerogatives of capital. The spectacle of violence dramatizes the power of the state to dominate autonomous social movements. Violence actively constrains conceptions of the politically possible, gutting their understanding of the viability of the new "democratic" political spaces. Violence has rewritten revolutionary narratives of empowerment and national level reform, replacing them with a palpable cynicism, which is linked to political inaction. The only sphere where substantial, and seemingly lasting gains have been achieved is in the field of local race relations. Mayans have taken over local politics in a majority of highland towns, seemingly for good. As far as this goes, there is no indication that Mayans see these victories as creating any openings for their national level political aspirations. The state is still a specter, a vampire that watches and waits. The level of selective violence characteristic of Guatemala today may not seem out of the range of the normal, and it obviously meets the feeble international expectations for democratic states, but it is more devastating due to the recent history of extreme violence that each attack. Each attack on autonomous social movement reminds the Mayan and poor population of past violence, assuring them that democracy has its limits. This might be why when it happens it is exaggerated, why it makes a point of crossing the line into the realm of illegality. To the extent that violence is necessary to assure Mayan submission to the Guatemalan social order, it is also

undermines the claims to legitimacy of the social order, which, ever since the Peace Accords, increasingly bases its claims to legitimacy in the protection of Mayans as full citizens. Continued acts of violence contradict these messages, and generate widespread unrest. The question to be answered in the post-revolutionary era is whether violence will generate more protests against the state, or more submission.

Now that Mayan politics, at least in some form, is sanctioned, and the movement is growing, and as the threat of violence wanes, it will be especially difficult for the state to manage the forms of historical imagination and politics that emerge in these groups. Near the end of his life, José Antulio Morales spearheaded a move to the left and towards a cultural rights focus among his political organization. The reason this move failed, and why the FRG won instead, was due to the fact that counterinsurgency strategy has steadily eroded the political ground these movements occupied.

Regularized selective violence is not the only modality through which disempowering state imaginaries are reproduced. More important than violence in this regard, while never independent of it, is project-centered state development. More than through acts of violence, the ritualized provision of "development" is the primary medium through which rural Mayans encounter "the state." Conservative parties responded to post-violence Mayan organizing, a few years after these groups congealed, with offers of development and key mayoral positions, provided that communities stay out of leftist politics and affiliate with their parties. Mayans, for whom development represented increased quality of life and equality with Ladinos, accepted this arrangement and waited for new political openings. The army, political parties and state officials narrate this form of "apolitical" development as a sanctioned and idealized route to full Mayan inclusion in national political and economic life. This narrative promises that infrastructure and assistance programs will rebuild war-torn communities. They also

demonstrate the state's commitment to promoting and protecting Mayan culture and autonomy.

The Mayan-state relationship constituted through development that predominates today could never have come into existence without the prior effects of extreme state violence on the population. Prior to its conditioning on party affiliation, promises of aid are predicated on political obedience. In these spaces and activities, Mayans perform a supplicatory act, consistent with the disciplinary assimilation, in which they make appeals to the all-powerful state, appeals that affect the very quantity of life itself. Life is not defined by the desire of Mayans for a transformed society, but in the terms dictated by the state itself: discrete, selectively provided development projects. Through a combination of politicization and scarcity, project-centered state development acts directly on the affects generated by state violence. Not only do Mayans humble themselves in front of the state in ritualized development practice, they also submit to new forms of surveillance. They also make themselves and their desires visible to bureaucrats in parties and institutions, to whom they make promises of support, giving groups with no ethical commitment to the community great influence over community dynamics. Through development, the threat of state power to withhold life is a background detail in Mayan imaginaries, always present and acknowledged in state efforts to preserve life. This is experienced in everyday life as the threat of scarcity and of being "left out." In this imaginary, the threat of exclusion from resources is represented by the desires for survival of ones' own neighbors. Community conflicts over development projects—material instantiations of life itself—have become brutal and calcified, and they have driven the idea of a collective political project further from the realm of the thinkable. In this context, almost any project that does not benefit every community member is experienced as a loss to others, and becomes an impediment to

community cohesion. Unity is a scarce quantity as every family and individual fends for their self.

Violence and development, although distinct mechanisms of power, work synergistically to make new forms of governance possible. Development programs do not only affect Mayan politics due to the way that they reshape Mayan imaginaries of the state, they exert a powerful form of spatial control, investing Mayans in community level conflicts that define lines between families, village sub-sectors, and party affiliates all the more rigidly with each electoral cycle. As Mayans are included through development, they are neutralized politically, their capacity for collective action and collective empowerment are deeply impaired. Pursuit of individual and subgroup well-being and interests undermine group interests and community cohesion. This dominant trend is, indeed, how the strategy seems designed to work, a sort of arrangement whereby political parties share the responsibility of governing Mayan communities as they compete for Mayan votes.

At the same time, the state's shift to development has opened new possibilities for Mayan political agency, most crucially by redefining the terms of the Mayan-state relationship. Now state legitimacy is increasingly contingent on its commitment and ability to respond to local desires for resources, economic security, and ethnic equality through development. Parties compete with one another to incite and satisfy these desires to gain a political following. Yet, contradictions inherent in the state's move to ground its legitimacy on its commitment and ability to respond to Mayan desires for resources and empowerment through development, on the one hand, and the dismal outcome of state programs, on the other, produce new forms of political opposition.

Development definitely works with and reprograms the same types of affects and understandings that are the target of state violence. But we can also look at both violence

and development reactive, as signs of insecurity emitted by a state that is unsure about its own claims legitimacy and its ability to dominate the "democratic" political field. State activities involve a desperate desire to "look" or appear in control, in order, it seems, to stay in control. The potential for collective Mayan agency, if it coalesced into a united political bloc, is larger than the power of the state to repress it. It would transform the country. The promise of full citizenship for Mayans, Xincas and Garifunas holds this possibility, even if these are undermined by other parts of those agreements, as well as the subsequent reneging upon these agreements by the elite, who, internal divisions aside, is in complete agreement on the basic tenets of democratic governance: limited selective violence and divide and conquer pacification-style development politics.

The vast majority of rural Mayans view the state as an illegitimate source of authority. For many of them, these acts of self-conjuring are transparent. But the state is remystified in these demysticifations of the agent of mystification, a real intentional agent. This remystified state is widely viewed as nearly omnipotent and everpresent, with the knowledge and the capability to destroy. As Nelson says that Mayans see the state as a piñata, a source of treats (1999). The question is not whether or not Mayans think the state is legitimate, but whether or not legitimacy is what matters when what one is doing is imagining the likely result of collective political agency.

Signs of unrest in this outrageous and shameful approach to governance are everywhere. Mayans across the political spectrum, from different parties and different economic classes voice resistance to violence, corruption, favoritism, divisions, false promises of aid, the failure of projects to combat poverty, and resource extraction–all framed in local moral idioms. The state's responsibility to provide development and its failure to deliver are constantly invoked. These protests have proliferated and become more urgent. Mayan activists from different generations increasingly invoke the state's

new role as defender of life to criticize political strategies that prolong the apartheid-like exclusion and exploitation of Mayans by destroying their hope and their communities. Ironically, FRG-aligned Mayans tapped into widespread anger over these issues to win San Pedro's local elections in 2003. FRG development strategies involve targeting communities and community sub-sectors towards groups excluded from past rounds of development. Despite their moralizing rhetoric about project distribution, the FRG's own party strategies furthered these processes on their own watch, entrenching the project-centric notion of politics, dependency relations and political divisions.

Complicating the effects of violence, and violent, project-centered development, state agrarian modernization programs have a complicated and shifting relationship to Mayan politics in the last thirty years, including an unexpected role in Mayan authoritarianism. Years before project-centered development became a commonplace fact of life in Mayan villages, agrarian modernization and education were offered as a sanctioned path out of poverty. Mayan leaders responded enthusiastically to promises of economic prosperity framing state initiatives like DIGESA, reading their civilizing discourse and disciplinary pedagogy as an antidote for colonial marginalization. My research fills in a central piece of the puzzle described by Hale, outlining the conditions under which "universalist" conceptions of politics (what I refer to as depoliticizing elements) came to saturate the political field and capture the imagination of post-violence Mayan political organizations. Although grassroots conceptions of betterment and advancement certainly existed, and definitely informed the autonomous cooperative movement, state programs like DIGESA redefined these notions in particular ways. I argue that a central element of this redefinition was the notion of the self as a life project, as an enterprise—something to be calculated, planned, and invested. This was conceived

of as an individual process, a succession of responsible, "modern" choices. These notions were selectively appropriated by Mayans.

Discourses of capacidad have had a significant impact on Mayan communities and Mayan politics. Capacidad provided the moral basis for Mayan political ascendance, by providing a neutral standard on which Mayan political movements in the mid-1980s and early 1990s could be compared to Ladinos and challenge their authority. While universalist, capacidad was not totally "assimilationist": the term capacidad was revoiced to fit Mayans needs for political empowerment. In the same process, capacidad altered local conceptions of inequality and political alternatives. The uneven spread of practices of capacidad have advanced alongside, and probably intensified, processes of stratification within Mayan communities that had begun with cash cropping. Capacidad and superacion, was only a reality only for a small percentage of rural Mayans, due to the fact that most people could not afford to send their children to school, and that capacidad did not always, or even most often, lead to superacion. Nevertheless, its notions of responsible intelligent economic choices as a recipe for individual economic advancement inform local thinking about social inequality. A substantial number of young professional and highly educated or capacitated Mayans to believe in rhetoric of the economic policies associated with new Free Trade Amendments. Many more economically comfortable Mayans perceive of poverty as less of a political problem, and primarily as an individual shortcoming or choice. People who had already made it or from well off families had personal reasons to espouse this narrative, despite its ill fit with the precariousness of the local economic situation. These discourses allow certain individuals to experience their own success as evidence of personal achievement or possession of a unique quality. These depoliticizing, universalist notions had become so powerful that they it had almost completely eclipsed revolutionary narratives about the

causes and solutions to poverty. Discourses of individual blame crowd out critiques of structural inequality. This was evident in wave of Mayan political organizing in San Pedro in the 1990s.

Divisions based on notions of capacidad also helped create the conditions for a neo-authoritarian resurgence in the highlands. Alongside and through these processes, capacidad became a neutral or objective standard for assessing the relative value of persons. People with more capacidad were more important, more credible and more worth of respect. Jokes and insults about less capacitated people and families became common. Discourses of capacidad fostered a form of discrimination among Mayans. This is exacerbated by the fact that a few men seen as most embodying these norms of capacidad monopolized community leadership positions, and often became abusive and arrogant. The resulting division was politically exploitable. The FRG fields politically inexperienced, cynical, opportunistic and corrupt or corruptible candidates. Often these politicians are only minimally literate, were excluded from leadership positions in previous postwar Mayan political organizations, and many have little conception of the stakes of past political movements.

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Sampedranos would not support the FRG if they thought they could vote for a more progressive party and that that vote would be efficacious act of political agency, in other words, that it could change the national racial political hierarchy. Even given the unnatural foreclosure on the field of possible political options, Mayans would not support the FRG unless some Mayans saw it as the only way to access scarce and badly needed resources. And it is also unlikely that this party would have found local leaders willing to represent it, given the ridicule of their neighbors and their own unwholesome feelings and

misgiving about supporting a pro-military party, if they were not so angry about being excluded and disrespected—not to mention left out of corruption money—in their own villages by their own neighbors. Few FRG supporters believe that the populist rhetoric is anything more than rhetoric. They still distrust, loathe, and fear the state. But they do know that politics brings "treats," and they are also aware of the very limited nature of these treats.

These findings have relevance for political actors on the ground. They clarify the limits of neoliberal multiculturalism, particularly its complicity with colonial governance. It also shows how authoritarian governance continues to produce effects on Mayan politics, and also how these effects operate through, not just alongside, the very mechanisms of neoliberal multiculturalism. Furthermore, this work provides a map of governance and state effects that can assist in local political actors reflections on the pitfalls and spaces of opportunity in state strategies. By drawing attention to the micro-practices through which political common sense, investments, and habits of being and feeling are reproduced, this work hopes to open a space for reflection on alternatives.

NOTES

[1] Following the Peace Accords and a string of internationally approved elections, Guatemala is widely understood to be "in transition" towards democracy. The departure of the UN's Mission to Guatemala (MINUGUA) in 2005 gave the feel that a substantial part of this transition has already occurred. NGO's are withdrawing from Guatemala as international funding looks for other areas, recently affected by the ongoing wars. Public declarations by the Bush administration, coupled with the restoration of military aid cut off by Carter, further confirm Guatemala's passage.

[2] The Guatemalan media repeatedly draws attention to the ironic chasm between claims by the left to represent the rural Mayan population, on the one hand, and the small number of those same people who actually get on their feet to support leftist politics, on the other. Conservatives herald this as evidence of staunch grassroots opposition to reformist political goals and methods. In the same way that the army described

counterinsurgency measures like the PAC as "voluntary," they want to naturalize Mayan neo-authoritarianism.

[3] In the current climate, "defending democracy" has become the new mantra for efforts by the Guatemalan right to de-legitimate leftist organizations. In lockstep with the Bush administration's rhetoric, the Guatemalan government and media depict social movement tactics as threats to private property, free movement, national development—all of which are seen as essential to democracy and freedom. The war on terror began with the idea that the world is divisible between those that support democracy and freedom defined as the advance of the neoliberal world order—us—and those who do not: terrorists or terrorist supporters.[3] Commitment to supporting the US is far more important than upholding international norms for human rights. Minimal reform and lip service to democratic ideals is sufficient in this cynical discourse, which poses as and passes for realism.

[4] Hale identifies two major ideological groupings in Mayan communities, the "Mayan centered" and the "universalists," which he associates with a distinction between Mayan empowerment and "practices of assimilation." Universalists, including most new Mayan alcaldes who support center-right parties, are in the majority. Mayan-centrists refuse the universalist politics that affirms equality with no changes to account for historical exclusion. Universalists ignore cultural rights activism, out of "fear, resignation, or political philosophy." Hale sees this division as fluid, and also hard to quantify given existing data.

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Vita

Nicholas Copeland was born on April 16, 1973 in Memphis, Tennessee. His parents are Lowell Copeland and Marian Rea. He graduated Marcus High School in 1991 in Flower Mound, TX. He then went on to receive a BA in English from the University of Texas at Austin in 1997 and an MA in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin in 2001. He has published an MA thesis, Postwar Development: the Making of Guatemala's Political Transition, and two works in Spanish: *La lucha invisible: organización política de las mujeres en Colotenango* and *Proyectos, partídos y las comunidades*. While pursuing graduate studies, Nicholas worked as a teaching assistant in six undergraduate courses. He was awarded a dissertation writing fellowship from the H.F. Guggenheim Foundation for the year 2006-2007.

Permanent address: 2507 Frontier Trl. Granbury, TX 76048

This dissertation was typed by the author.